

Abraham Abulafia: Ecstatic Kabbalah and Spiritual Messianism

THE most prominent example of a profound synthesis of Kabbalah and messianism is embodied in the writings, experience, and life of Abraham Abulafia. Abulafia was the first Kabbalist to have seen himself explicitly, and apparently also publicly, as a Messiah. He is also the first Kabbalist whose messianic calling arose in exactly the same year as he commenced his Kabbalistic studies. He combined the mystical path in the forms of *via perfectionis* with a strong quest for apocalyptic experiences, and regarded both apoteosis and theophany as having strong eschatological and messianic valences.

Abraham ben Shmuel Abulafia was born in Saragossa, in the province of Aragon, in the year 1240. While he was still an infant, his family relocated to Tudela. In 1260, two years after the death of his father, he left Spain for Acre, in the Galilee, in order to find the mythical Sambation River.¹ These were the very years of the Mongolian invasion of Syria and the land of Israel, a matter that was well known throughout Europe. It is quite possible that Abulafia thought, as did many others of his generation, that the Mongols were themselves the "hidden ones," *ha-genuzim*, the ten lost tribes of Israel, reputed by legend to be dwelling beyond the Sambation River.² But Abulafia never journeyed past the town of Acre; nearby wars and the awareness, which could be more easily reached in the East, that the Mongols were not one of the lost tribes, apparently convinced him to abandon his quest. Instead, he went back to Europe. While in Greece, he married; thence he went to Italy, where he studied philosophy, specifically Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, in Capua, near Rome. Afterwards he arrived in Catalonia, where he was living around the year 1270,

This was the year in which he claims that he received a revelation in which he was commanded to go and seek an audience with the pope.³ The revelation took place in Barcelona, where, in the same year when he claims to have begun to study the different commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*, apparently within a group of Kabbalists. These studies proved fateful for the development of Kabbalah as a whole, and, specifically, for Abulafia's spiritual metamorphosis. He went on to develop a new conception of Kabbalah that he called variously, "Prophetic Kabbalah" and "Kabbalah of the Names." The first title expresses the ultimate purpose of this Kabbalah, that is, to guide the initiate to an ecstatic experience which was (sometimes) described in the Middle Ages as prophecy; the second arises from the fact that the letters of the names of God play a major role in the technique that should lead the initiate to the ecstatic experience.

Abulafia's spiritual life can be sharply divided into pre-Kabbalistic and Kabbalistic phases. He was captivated by the mystical lore he had learned and, though never renouncing his philosophical views from the earlier period, he understood the whole range of Jewish thought and practice in the light of the ecstatic Kabbalah. An important question is whether the 1270 revelation was the result of Abulafia's resorting to certain techniques for reaching a mystical experience, or whether this revelation was a matter of divine grace. If the later explanation is preferred, then the messianic message not only precedes his involvement in mysticism and mystical techniques, but may also demonstrate Abulafia's concerted attempt to renew this form of experience. If the former possibility is ever proven by new documents, the messianic message will be seen as a single central aspect of ecstatic Kabbalah, though less, or even much less, its trigger. As I shall suggest later, it seems to me wiser to prefer the latter explanation.

Between the years 1280 and 1291 Abulafia was active almost exclusively on the island of Sicily, in Palermo and much more often Messina. In this most stable and creative period of his life, he produced the bulk of the literary legacy now in our possession. During these years he developed a following of students, among them R. Ahituv of Palermo, one of the most learned men of Sicily. Abulafia's success in establishing a school devoted to the study of his Kabbalah and the survival of many of his writings are indeed causes for amazement. For during this period, some prominent Sicilian Jews had questioned Abulafia's messianic pretensions and turned to one of the giants of the Halakhah, as well as the spiritual leader of Spanish Jewry, R. Shlomo ben Abraham ibn Adret (known by the acronym Rashba), to decide the question: could Abulafia be the Messiah or a prophet as he claimed to be? The original version of the question and Rashba's responses are not extant, but from slightly later documentation we can reconstruct the course of the argument between the two figures. This dispute proved

to be one of the first major polemics concerning Kabbalistic messianism during the Middle Ages.

The Rashba 'flatly' denied Abulafia's claim to be the Messiah. He expressed this in a letter, now lost, which was sent to Palermo and shown to Abulafia's students. The students were taken aback by the sharp tone of the letter and presumed that it could not have been written by the Rashba. They showed it to Abulafia, who confirmed its authenticity. He sent a reply to a colleague of the Rashba's in Barcelona, R. Yehudah Salmon, who had been a student of Abulafia's in the early 1270s. In this epistle, entitled *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, written relatively late in his literary career, Abulafia develops an interesting rebuttal of certain Kabbalistic views embraced by some theosophical Kabbalists; this could well be the first heated controversy between the Kabbalists belonging to different schools. A prevalent belief of Kabbalists in Castile and Catalonia was that the essence of the divine realm was composed of ten *sefirot*, or divine powers. Abulafia describes the theosophical doctrines that are based on this view of the divine world as worse than the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The Christians, he says, at least only believe in three divine hypostases, while those Kabbalists hold by ten.⁴ This attack is without doubt a reaction to the stinging tone of the letter from the Rashba, who was himself a theosophical Kabbalist. Apparently the Rashba answered Abulafia's attack in another missive to the Sicilians, but the argument stops there owing to the paucity of documentation. Another probable factor is that Abulafia died somewhere around 1291, and the Rashba, who outlived him by some fifteen or twenty years, was able to claim that he won the argument because he succeeded "in closing the doors before Abulafia." Still, we can conclude from the Rashba's own words that Abulafia was very influential in Sicily. This dispute must be emphasized, was between two Kabbalists and was at least partially concerned with the preference of one Kabbalistic system over another. Yet the central issue of the argument, as well as its starting point, was Abulafia's claim to be the Messiah and to prophesy.

This controversy had significant repercussions for the subsequent development of the Kabbalah in Spain, because, in effect, the ecstatic or prophetic Kabbalah of Abulafia was banned as a result of the firm opposition of the Rashba. Indeed, the Rashba apparently dealt with both the theoretical side of the problem, namely, Abulafia's messianic pretensions, and with the practical repercussions of Abulafia's activities, expressly admitting that Abulafia almost managed to lead astray the Jews of Sicily. During that period, Sicily was a seat of wide-ranging Jewish cultural activity, mostly in the domain of philosophy. Abulafia's ability to attract students and win the admiration of some elite figures shows that he certainly possessed great intellectual capabilities.

Prophecy and Messianism

Unlike most of the eschatological Jewish literature of the early Middle Ages, some of Abulafia's writings belong to what has been described as prophetic eschatology. In his writings, and, I assume in his spiritual life as well, prophecy and messianism were, two, branches that grew from the same trunk,⁵ more precisely, from the vision he had in Barcelona in 1270. It was in this very period that he started his Kabbalistic studies, and ultimately went on to develop his own system. In a commentary on one of his prophetic compositions, *Sefer ha-Edut* (Book of Testimony), he relates: "In the ninth year, [nine years before composing this testimony], I was aroused by God to go to the great city of Rome, as I was commanded in Barcelona in the year of thirty."⁶ This command resounds with strong messianic portent, since the journey to Rome was established, according to Nahmanides, as a prerequisite of the coming of the Messiah. In a famous disputation held in Barcelona, Nahmanides took the position that, as a result of a directive from God, the Messiah will come before the pope and proclaim himself as such:

For here it is not stated that he had arrived,⁷ only that he was born on the day of the destruction [of the Temple]; for was it on the day that Moses was born that he immediately went to redeem Israel? He arrived only a number of days later, under the command of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, and [then] said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go that they may serve Me."⁸ So, too, when the end of time will have arrived the Messiah will go to the pope under the command of God and say, "Let my people go that they may serve Me," and until that time we will not say regarding him that he has arrived for he is not [yet] the Messiah.⁹

Nahmanides clearly distinguishes between the one who was born and in the future will be the Messiah, and the Messiah's actual revelation due to the fulfillment of his mission, which would make him the actual Messiah.¹⁰ This idea is also expressed by Abulafia when he says: "And he said that the Messiah will arrive immediately, for he is already born."¹¹ We may conclude that Abulafia also conceived of two stages in the career of the Messiah: his birth, when he apparently has been destined to be a Messiah, and his arrival. His birth makes him the Messiah *in potentia* and his arrival makes him the actual Messiah. The advent of the Messiah, formulated by Nahmanides as part of a religious dispute with the Christians, and by Abulafia as part of his self-perception as a messianic figure, is expressed in Hebrew by the verb, *ba'*. This arrival at the end of time should also be understood as connected to the Messiah's appearing in the presence of the pope. This decisive act recalls, not only Moses' coming into the presence of

Pharaoh, but also, the advent of the redemptive figure of Shiloh, described in Genesis 49:10, by the verb, *ba'*, and, of course the designation of Jesus as the Lord, Who Cometh.¹²

According to some Jewish (including midrashic) sources, the Messiah is waiting, among the poor, in Rome.¹³ Thus, it seems that Nahmanides had good reason to use in his description of the coming of the Messiah the same verb in connection to the Messiah's coming to Rome. In fact, this is a typological approach that sees the future Messiah in terms of earlier, similar events.¹⁴ Unlike the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, however, Abulafia's perception of his mission to the pope is not so much as a power struggle or demonstration of superior magic as it is a spiritual contest between Kabbalah and Christianity—perhaps, even, the coronation of the Jewish Messiah by the Christian pope. If the Messiah was perceived as the king of the Jews, the possible implication of such a meeting would be that the pope would anoint him as he did other kings.

The proximity of prophecy and messianism in Abulafia's writings is not accidental. It underlines the strong bond between them and provides a rationale for the continued complimentary coexistence of these two conceptual entities. In a few places Abulafia even mentions prophecy and messianism in one breath. For example, he writes, "When I arrived at [the knowledge of] the Names, by my loosening of the bonds of the seals,¹⁵ the Lord of All¹⁶ appeared to me and revealed to me his secret and informed me of the end of the exile and of the time of the beginning of redemption. He compelled me to prophesy."¹⁷

The initial stage of preoccupation, expressed by the phrase "When I arrived at [the knowledge of] the Names" (that is, by his Kabbalistic practices), enabled Abulafia to free himself of the bonds of the material world; only thereafter was he graced with a revelation. Within this revelation lies the mystical experience Abulafia termed *prophecy*. It was only then that God revealed "to him the secret of the end of the exile and the time."

In other words, specific mystical techniques have facilitated a spiritual development which involves both a sharp mystical awareness, described here as the liberation of the conscience from the burden of corporeality, and an ensuing revelation that is fraught with messianic overtones. The text is based on a gematria that was crucial for Abulafia: *ha-kol*, according to the way I decode Abulafia's text, stands for five thousand and fifty, which corresponds to 1290, the year when Abulafia thought that the redemption, *ha-ge'ullah*, would come. The word *ha-ge'ullah* is numerically equivalent to fifty, another hint at the same year. The implication of the text is, quite eschatological, as a precise time for the beginning of the redemption is mentioned. The apocalyptic themes, however, have been ignored. To believe Abulafia, the mystical technique and the loosening of the knots have preceded the revelation, which has an eschatological meaning.

Thus, in this period of his activity, mysticism is not seen as derived from the messianic awareness, but rather the messianic message is the culmination of a mystical path and achievement. This is also the picture one gets from the earlier writings of this Kabbalist: in the first books the messianic elements are absent, and only some years later do the messianic elements become more conspicuous, yet never do they become essential to Abulafia's Kabbalah.

The absence of the eschatological elements in some of Abulafia's writings does not invalidate the view that redemptive experiences are the culmination of the Kabbalistic way of life. Thus, prophecy (or ecstasy) and messianism should be seen as a more particular aspect of broader mystical phenomena in Abulafia's life and thought. For him prophecy stands for the more mystical spiritual processes—instances of *unio mystica*, epistemic or ontic—which are indeed conceived of as spiritually salvific, as well as for the reception of more precise revelations which are closer to eschatological prophecy. From this point of view, Abulafia is following tendencies found in Muslim illuministic philosophical forms of thought.

This type of relationship between messianism and ecstatic Kabbalah is not, however, the only plausible way to formulate the question. Indeed, the above proposal follows Abulafia's explicit stand, but the story might nevertheless have been more complex. Abulafia's visit to the Middle East in search of the Sambation can be seen as part of a messianic enterprise related to the ten lost tribes. Thus, long before entering the field of Kabbalistic studies, he at least flirted with messianism. I assume that though his first Kabbalistic studies may indeed have been divorced from messianic hopes, his success may have encouraged a return of his earlier aspirations. The rejection of the eschatological speculations in his earlier writings, with the exception of the revelation he reported in 1280 as having taken place in 1270, might have been part of his disillusion when learning that the Mongols are not the ten lost tribes.

In the early 1260s, while studying Maimonides' works, Abulafia could have been acquainted with the idea that the return of prophecy will precede the coming of the Messiah; given the Kabbalistic techniques to achieve prophecy, he could easily see this development as conducive to a messianic consciousness. In other words, the earlier messianic adventure might have created in him a form of consciousness that resurfaced in a much more sophisticated manner later, in the form of the mystico-messianic version. Such an explanation does not subordinate the mystical to the messianic but nevertheless presupposes that Abulafia's insistence on referring to his mystical experiences in terms of prophecy may have something to do with the prophecy-messianism nexus. Prophecy and messianism also appear together in a later work of Abulafia's, where the sequel between the mystical phase and the eschatological one fits this suggestion. Thus, he writes:

the prophet is necessarily called *mashiyyah*¹⁸ because he is anointed with the 'supernal oil that is called "the oil of anointing" . . . with which he utilizes the Names. Actually the *mashiyyah* must possess two qualities: one, that he first be anointed by God with wondrous prophecy¹⁹ and, two, that he continue to be consecrated by God and people who will hail him as their great king of all times and he will rule from sea to sea.²⁰ And this is all due to the great intensity of his clinging²¹ to the divine intellect and his reception of the power in a strong manner as it was the matter of Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon. And the issue of *mashiyyah* will be known by everyone, and this is the reason why there is no more need to announce here its issue, because he is destined to reveal himself shortly in our days.²²

Here again there are two phases in the messianic enterprise. The first one consists of the prophet being called by the title *mashiyyah*. This stage is actually an expression of the identical nature of the mystical phenomenon and the messianic phenomenon. It is only after this anointment by God "with wondrous prophecy," namely after reaching a mystical experience, that the prophet is able to enter the second stage of being accepted by "people who will hail him as their great king of all times." Indeed, this resort to the image of the king is frequent in Abulafia's writings and is reminiscent of the royal ideology. We read, for example, in *Sefer Maftehat ha-Tokhehor*: "And Divine virtues are added to him until he speaks with the holy spirit, whether in his writing or with his mouth; on this issue it is said that this is in truth the king of kings of flesh and blood, as is said among people about a unique king of kings, that he alone and those like him have passed the boundary of humanity and cleaved in their lifetime to their God, and even more so when their natural and contingent matter dies."²³

There can be no doubt that this statement treats of an apotheotic transformation which involves also a messianic perception of the king. The king appears to be none other than the *mashiyyah*. This spiritual phenomenon possesses—and this is what Abulafia intended to emphasize—mystical meaning, and the messianic attainment is due to the great intensity of his clinging to the divine intellect and his being imbued with the power possessed by Moses and other prophets. The comparison with Moses in the above passage resounds with messianic significance since Moses was often portrayed in the Midrash as the first savior and the Messiah as the last. Although mentioning the power of the Messiah, however, Abulafia is not particularly concerned with Moses' miraculous deeds, even less so with the apocalyptic Messiah's miraculous and violent ones. Strength still remains as a trait ascribed to the Messiah, though the violence characteristic of most of the apocalyptic dramas is drastically marginalized. Abulafia's view of the Messiah reflects his vision of God more as an intellect than as a will, while the concepts of the apocalyptic Messiah are structured within a theology where the power and will of God are one of the major forms of

theophany. As we shall see, the concept of Agent Intellect, which plays a central role in Abulafia's messianism, is not devoid of the concept of power, but it is an impersonal or depersonalized form of power that does not depend on will. Abulafia sees spiritual messianism as preceding the more external one.

Mashiyah as a Spiritual Experience

There is, however, more than a two-stage process (divine anointment and popular acclaim as king) in the making of a Messiah. Abulafia also terms the components of the process by the name *mashiyah*. Thus, he writes in another of his works:

the term *mashiyah* is equivocal, [designating] three [different] matters: in truth, first and foremost the Agent Intellect is called the *mashiyah* . . . and the man who will forcibly bring us out of exile from under the rule of the nations due to his contact²⁴ with the Agent Intellect—he will [also] be called *mashiyah*. And the material human hylic intellect is called *mashiyah*, and is the Redeemer and has influence over the soul and over all elevated spiritual powers. It can save the soul from the rule of the material kings and their people and their powers, the lowly bodily desires. It is a commandment and an obligation to reveal this matter to every wise man of the wise ones of Israel in order that he may be saved because there are many things that oppose the opinions of the multitude of the rabbis, and even more differ from the views of the *vulgaris*.²⁵

This passage is of paramount importance for Abulafia's conceptualization of the *mashiyah*. The main assertion is that *mashiyah* denotes three different entities. The first is a transcendent entity, while the two other are found in the human world. It is this approach, reminiscent of the Maimonidean hermeneutics of the biblical text, which imposed some philosophical meanings on some sensitive biblical terms in order to discard their anthropomorphical ones. Abulafia, while adopting this strategy, is less inclined when dealing with *mashiyah* to abandon the more popular significance of the term, although it is implicitly marginalized. Though pretending to be the *mashiyah* himself, he interprets this concept to cover an impersonal transcendent entity as well.

The first meaning of *mashiyah* is Agent Intellect. This term translates the Greek *nous poetikos*, used for the first time in book 3 of Aristotle's *De Anima*, in a context that has long been under dispute. The first explanation, accepted by medieval Latin scholastics, argued that the *intellectus agens*, the Latin translation of *nous poetikos*, is an inner human capacity, found in the soul, which activates the intellectual processes. According to the version of Aristotelian philosophical psychology dominant in many circles of Muslim-Jewish thinkers in Middle Ages, the Agent Intellect, denoted by the terms 'aql al-fa'al or *sekhel ha-po'el*, is a

cosmic, not an internal human power, oftentimes the last in a series of ten intellects which were emanated by the divine intellect; the Agent Intellect causes all the changes in nature and all the processes related to human intellect.²⁶ The medieval ideal of human intellectual perfection was conceived by some philosophers as the actualization of the potential of the intellect, be it material or human. This actualization of any human act of intellectual cognition is attained, according to Neoaristotelian epistemology, by the influence of or illumination exerted by the Agent Intellect, for if it were not so this lower intellect would disappear.

The Agent Intellect may therefore be imagined as a savior of what some trends of medieval philosophy saw as the most important part in man, and as such it is prone to be conceived of as a Messiah, although it is not a person but rather an objective spiritual impersonal power. Abulafia apparently offers a synthesis of the philosophical concept, which has some redemptive qualities vis-à-vis the human intellect, and the apocalyptic view of the preexisting Messiah found in the supernal world and waiting to appear in due time. In both cases the Messiah as a transcendent entity exists prior to its actual eschatological performance, and though sometimes strongly related to it, he also has cosmological contexts. In the former case the Messiah is incessantly active, while in the latter the salvific approach is impeded by the apocalyptic date. In the two cases, however, there is a vital affinity between the nature of God and the nature of His representative. God as the divine warrior produced, according to B. Halpern's thesis, the king-warrior, who is the clue to the emergence of the apocalyptic perception of the Messiah-warrior. Thus, Abulafia is much less concerned with the martial aspects of redemption, or the concept of the Messiah as a suffering servant, and his thought belongs to the *via perfectionis*.

Union or contact with the Agent Intellect should be thought of, in my opinion, as a full-fledged mystical experience, despite the fact that this cosmic intellect is the lowest of the ten separate intellects. As we shall see, the expressions used to convey the conjunction with the *intellectus agens* are quite extreme, and they invite a reading of these descriptions as pointing to *unio mystica*. It is much more important, it seems to me, to pay attention to the quality of the experience as it transpires in the Kabbalistic texts than to the object of union, be it God or the Agent Intellect.

On the other hand, the philosophical vision of God in medieval Jewish Neoaristotelianism is related to the concept of the Agent Intellect, which reproduces the intellectual nature of the divine, and it in turn was identified with the Messiah as an intellectual entity. Neoaristotelian concepts were of the utmost importance for the ecstatic Kabbalistic view of the Messiah. Aristotelian philosophy, which apparently does not initially display an explicit interest in issues of

human redemption, generated, together with the (sometimes eschatological) archangel Metatron a certain form of soteriology.²⁷ The myth of the preexisting salvific personality, as formulated in apocalyptic sources, is attenuated here by the transformation of the redemptive process, achieved by the act of cleaving, into an intellectual event. While the apocalyptic Messiah was conceived of as a rather static entity which will enter history at a preestablished time and become an active force, the Agent Intellect is ever active and by definition omnipresent. It incessantly pours the intellectual forms upon the lower world, and as such its activity is quite atemporal. The messianic interpretation of the Agent Intellect involves a transpersonal and thus depersonalized function, which is always present and active, whose message is strongly connected to the nature of the entity that fulfills the function. A separated and ever-acting intellect is emanating forms, or acts of intellection, and they are, ultimately, the factors that constitute the quintessence of this model of messianism: to perfect all the existing intellects. The peculiar character of the specific human persona who will be instrumental in conveying the message in human terms is much less important. In a domain dominated by the spirit, here the intellectual activity of both the human and the separate intellect, preestablished dates lose the crucial role they ordinarily play in eschatological messianism.

Identifying the Agent Intellect with a supernal Messiah provides a clue to understanding the significance of the revelatory experiences, at least insofar as the so-called prophetic books of Abulafia are concerned. For this Kabbalist, the Agent Intellect is the source of all intellectual acts in man, as well as the main source of revelation. Thus, the information imparted by this intellect, and correct information in general, is presupposed to be either of a salvific nature, closer to the philosophical view of redemption as an inner spiritual change, or of an apocalyptic nature, dealing with dates and historical events. It is this ontological transpersonal Messiah *qua* source of knowledge that, according to ecstatic Kabbalah, the mystic is unified with and informed by.

But as pivotal as knowledge is in the works under discussion and in medieval philosophical theories, we should not forget the aspect of power that is involved in this concept. Indeed, some philosophers and mystics emphasized the noetic aspect of the Agent Intellect. This is not, however, an intellect involved only in the human acts of cognition but explicitly a cosmic power responsible, according to some versions, not only for the actualization of the human intellect but also for every shift of forms in this lower world. In a deep sense, the medieval discussions of the Agent Intellect as articulated after Abu Nasr Al-Farabi betray it to be a ruler of the sublunar world. Any significant change is related to it, and it may be understood as a version of *deus revelatus*, with the assumption that the highest intellect, identified with God, is not concerned with processes taking

place in the mundane world. As the cosmocrator, the Agent Intellect is related to power, though this power is seen as totally impersonal. However, the impersonal tone of the philosophical descriptions of the Agent Intellect were modified by some of the mystics' experiences of the cosmocrator; this is especially the case in ecstatic Kabbalah, in the cases of Abraham Abulafia and R. Yitzhaq of Acre. This aspect of power facilitated the identification of the Aristotelian *nous poetikos*, which had purely noetic functions in the system of the Stagyrite, with some of the Jewish concepts of savior. In other words, the personal and violent power of the Messiah of the apocalypticists was adopted, and thus domesticated, by the elevation of the Messiah to the rank of a cosmic and therefore more constant form of power. Roughly speaking, the more popular groups remained interested in the personalized power, which was connected to political and miraculous actions of the king-savior, while the elites conceptualized messianism in terms of regularity and omnipresence. From this point of view, the Messiah's descent from the line of David remained crucial in apocalyptic messianism, while the more elitist version could not but use a more emanational explanation for the emergence of the transcendent redeemer.

In this context, let me discuss briefly a gematria proposed by Abulafia in *Hayyer ha-Olam ha-Ba*, where he equates "David ben Yishai Mashiyyah" to "Mashiyyah ben David, Na'at."²⁸ The phrases are numerically equivalent, as their letters amount to 742. That David is the son of Yishai and thus related to the Messiah is a commonplace, indeed a core idea in Jewish messianism. What is significant here is the introduction of the noun *na'ar*, which means literally a youth or a servant. Neither meaning, however, makes sense in this context. In my opinion, *na'ar* here stands for the archangel Metatron, who is sometimes designated by this term in the literature of late antiquity; it should be understood as pointing to the office of a minister. Metatron, was identified by several authors in the Middle Ages, but most eminently by Abulafia, with the Agent Intellect. Indeed, there is a certain phenomenological correlation between the two concepts, albeit they stem from radically different intellectual backgrounds. Imagined as the angelic power into which Enoch has been translated, Metatron is an eschatological figure, because he serves as the redemptive level for human existence. On the other hand, Metatron was described in many early sources as the ruler of the world and the scribe that keeps account of the deeds of men, again a role that has eschatological implications. Therefore, the eschatological potential of Metatron is hinted at already in the ancient Jewish texts dealing with this angel.

The salvific nature of the Agent Intellect is also implied in its role in actualizing the potential human intellect. According to some epistemological theories in

the Middle Ages, the Agent Intellect is the telos of human intellectual activity and the peak of human intellection as the union with this entity. From this point of view, the philosophical interpretations of messianism were more teleological, in the individual sense, than theological. In some cases we may assume that the philosophers were not only theoreticians, scholastic analysts of ancient philosophical texts or their harmony with the religious authoritative texts, but also individuals in search for self-realization, and the conceptual framework they discussed so carefully also meant for them a way of spiritual deliverance. In the last quotation we witness once again an identification between the Messiah, here called ben David, and the ontological entity that served as a noetic salvific power, exactly as in the passage from *Sefer ha-Melitz*.²⁹ However, in addition to the noetic function of the union, namely the knowledge acquired through contact with the cosmic intellect, there are instances in both Muslim and Jewish philosophy, and certainly in Abraham Abulafia, of descriptions of ontic identification that were deemed to produce a more substantial transformation of the human intellect.

The third meaning of the term *mashiyyah* is "material human intellect," namely the intellect after it has undergone a process of actualization. This intellectual human capacity is the Messiah of the human soul because it saves the soul from its bodily powers. Phrases like "the corporeal kings," "and their peoples and their powers," all express, allegorically, the material side of man. This hylic Messiah will save the "people of Israel" from the "historical" kings; or, understood metaphorically, the human intellect within each man will save his soul from the rule of the kings—the material element in man, his desires, and his imagination. Mastering them is considered by Abulafia to be part of a redemptive phenomenon as well. This more "ordinary" vision of the Messiah as a hylic intellect assumes in fact that the Messiah is not only a transcendent transpersonal power available to everyone, in the form of the Agent Intellect, but also an intellectual power inherent in each person. In other words, everyone possesses the Messiah, at least *in potentia*; the Messiah is a dimension of man qua man. The philosophical interpretation of messianism in terms of intellection, though found in the writings of a few other medieval thinkers, was never elaborated in such detail as Abulafia did. Indeed, he was aware of the novelty of his proposal and the divergences between such an intellectualistic interpretation and the more common concepts of the Messiah found among the rabbis or held by popular Jewish circles. The tension between these views is evident in the closing sentence of the above passage, and it reverberates from time to time in other discussions. Nevertheless, Abulafia presents his exposition of such an unpopular view as an imperative, designed to help the illuminati to redeem themselves. By

disseminating such an intellectual understanding of the concept he means to help others to save themselves, an event that apparently has nothing to do with their expectation of the advent of a savior as a human form.

Another passage from Abulafia elaborates on the messianic potentiality found in every human/hylic intellect. After mentioning the "influx of Satan," which is none other than the "likeness of Satan," and then God and "His Messiah," the ecstatic Kabbalist writes:

you already know that body is an animal, and the soul is a light, and the intellect is an influx. And man, by dint of his flesh and blood, is like an animal, and [his] soul like the light of the sphere, which governs over the flesh and the body, and the intellect like the influx that governs the sphere by its light, because the sphere is a body and its soul is a living light, which conceptualizes by its intellect . . . and likewise man is threefold, his body from this lower world, and his soul from the world of the sphere, and his intellect from the intellectual world . . . and the intellectual world is an intellect, and the [world of the] sphere is intelligizing, and the lower world is the intelligibilia, and man is compound of the three of them, in the moment of his departure [from this world] he inherits them all, because at the beginning he is intelligizing, at the middle he is intelligibilia, and at the end he is an intellect. The intention of his creation was that he will become an intellect, an act of intelligizing and intelligibilia.¹⁰

This text builds a parallelism between God, the influx, and intellect, on the one hand, and the Messiah, the soul or the light and the spheres, and finally the animal, corresponding to the body or Satan, on the other. All these elements are found in man, whose creation means an integration of them. The Messiah is therefore dormant in every person, and this capacity should be actualized. The above texts conspicuously seek to disseminate a spiritual model of messianism in which the object of redemption is the human soul or, according to its first formulation, the human intellect, and not necessarily the nation or even a certain group of people. This spiritual messianism is an integral part of Abulafia's Kabbalah. The spiritual forms of messianism are expressed by the first and third meanings of the term *mashiyah*, which consist of intellectual processes that occur within the human soul and not necessarily on the stage of history.

Let me examine closely the range of concepts that are subsumed under the heading of *mashiyah*. Two deal exclusively with internal messianism—that is, with psychological or poetic phenomena—treating either relations between the Active Intellect and the human intellect, or those between the actualization of the human intellect and the soul. The term *mashiyah* refers in these instances to a process that has no external, objective, or immediate historical implications. This is a definitive example of individual salvation being expressly described by the term *mashiyah*.

As we have seen, Abulafia calls the term *mashiyah* equivocal, because the three entities it refers to—the Agent Intellect, the material intellect, and the persona of the Messiah—differ from each other. It is possible, however, to envision them also as part of an ontic continuum, with the Agent Intellect on the top, the material intellect as the materialization of the Agent Intellect—following perhaps Averroistic psychology—and the persona as the external expression of the noetic processes between the two spiritual entities. Indeed, this concept of a continuum is important because it may allow a more unified reading of Abulafia's messianism, which will encompass the spiritual and individual, and the material and national, within a more comprehensive scheme. In the following example Abulafia discusses a continuum that starts with God and ends in man:

- Intellect is a term [applied] to the entity which rules over everything, i.e. the first cause of all; and it is called the form of the intellect. The [term] intellect is also [applied] to the entity separated from matter, which is emanated from the first cause; by the means of this emanation the first entity rules over the moving heavens. However He, may He be exalted, is the simple intellect. The [term] intellect is the name of the first cause which is close and acts upon whatever exists beneath the heavens, and this is the Active Intellect which causes [the emergence of] the intellect in the human soul. Therefore there are three stages, all three being but one essence: God, His emanation which is separated [from matter], and the emanation of this emanation, which is attached to the soul and the soul is attached to it in a very tenacious way, though the two [i.e. the soul and the emanation of God's emanation] are but one essence.³¹

In fact, the resort to the term *mashiyah* is very similar structurally to the manner in which the term *intellect* is portrayed here. This intellectual continuum, whose importance in Abulafia's mysticism is immense, absorbs the messianic figure into a much more stable system and emphasizes the significance of perfectibility of the natural order, rather than the need to transcend the present order in a definitive manner, as the apocalyptic thinkers would assume. Indeed, in several treatises Abulafia identified the Agent Intellect, whose affinity to the transcendent Messiah is paramount, with the Torah, a fact that carries a conservative implication of the supernal Messiah.

One of the problems that haunts any messianic event is the discrepancy between the various functions of the Messiah as imagined by a given society and the persona of the aspirant. In some cases, the emphasis is laid on the persona and its idiosyncratic life. In the case of the theories described in this chapter, however, the persona of the Messiah is much less important than his function as a disseminator of salvific knowledge. In fact, though the transpersonal Agent Intellect is conceived of as embodying itself in the individual hylic intellect, according to the theory of Averroes, this initial personalization is followed by a

depersonalization as part of the mental evolution of the person who is to become the Messiah. His acquiring more advanced forms of intellection means an imitation of the separate intellect, a removal of the importance of anything corporeal and emotional, in fact anything idiosyncratic. The evolving intellect gradually becomes disincarnated in order to be able to reach the unitive experience, losing its 'principium individuationis' in order to be able to become the savior of others. Abulafia describes the messianic experience, which is tantamount to and sometimes even precedes the supreme ecstatic one, in his most important handbook on a technique to reach an experience of the next world, namely, a strong experience while alive: "And it will appear to him as if his entire body, from head to foot, has been anointed with the oil of anointing, and he was 'the anointed of the Lord' [mashiyah YHWH] and His emissary, and he will be called 'the angel of the Lord' [mal'akh ha'-elohim]; his name will be similar to that of his Master, which is Shadday, who is called Metatron, the prince [namely the angel] of the [divine] Face."³³² Note the messianic tone, which accompanies the transformation into an angel, especially on the basis of the messianic background of the identification of Enoch with the Son of Man already in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch 9:17–19, 71, and, on the other hand, the process of anointment described in the Slavonic Book of Enoch:

And the Lord Said to Michael, "Go, and extract Enoch from [his] earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory. And so Michael did, just as the Lord had said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself; and I had become like one of the glorious ones; and there was no observable difference."³³³

Abulafia's description of the ecstatic mystic's transformation into an angel of God and his feeling of the anointment as a bodily experience is indeed reminiscent of the Slavonic Enoch. In both cases Enoch is involved, either implicitly or explicitly. The experience of anointment precedes that of becoming an emissary prophet, just as in the ancient Jewish ritual the anointment preceded the act of enthronement; and, as we have seen, the anointment as prophet precedes the transformation of the Messiah, from an individual into a national Messiah and king. To put it differently, the mystical experience, which is tantamount to individual redemption, precedes that of receiving the prophetic-political-messianic mission. Mysticism may transform someone into a prophet, and this achievement is preceding the royal installation which will take someone to more public forms of activity. The concreteness of Abulafia's description, which speaks not only about the reception of some secrets or a new understanding of the law,

but also, about personal corporeal feelings, is indubitably related to an ecstatic experience.

The messianic experience as described above invites a reflection on the affinity between time and space in the context of the history of the messianic ideas.³⁴ The closer to the eschaton the messianic experience is in time, the more concrete it tends to be; by inserting the Messiah into the model of an ecstatic Kabbalah, Abulafia not only introduces the ancient theme of anointment, which is part of a ritual, but also that of the feeling of an anointment that has to do with the descent of divine influx into the mystic. Likewise, as in the case of Polish Hasidism, by modeling the Messiah on an eighteenth-century *tzaddiq*, one Hasidic author imported the ecstatic element that also affects the body, in a manner similar to Abulafia's mention of the feeling of anointment during the experience he conceived of as messianic.³⁵ This mention is paramount: it shows that an accomplished mystic not only imagined himself by resorting to messianic terminology, but also claimed to have experienced something that was part of the ancient royal ideology as part of a mystical experience that can be induced and repeated by means of a mystical technique. This feeling allows an interpretation of the mystical-messianic moment as one of an experiential plenitude. By depersonalizing the apocalyptic Messiah and investing the mystic with a feeling of anointment, metaphoric or concrete, this form of messianism renounced the rendezvous destined to take place only in the expected dates of the apocalyptic mode. It is a messianism that is more concerned, as Vladimir Jankelevitch put it, with a matter of today than of tomorrow.

In his commentary on his own prophetic book *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, Abulafia reports (in the third person) a revelation he had. This passage is one of the very few in which a medieval figure defines himself as a Messiah:

And He said that the *mashiyah* will arrive immanently, for he is already born. And he continued to discourse on the entire subject, and said "I am that individual." And by [means of] the "seven luminous windows" he indicated the secret of the seven names, and that who runs is [tantamount to] the ordef and the permutator. It is He who speaks to Raziel and informs him that he is the seventh of the prophets. At that time he was commanded to go to Rome and do all that he did, and it is clear that this secret has been revealed to him. And he said that during the fortieth year this matter returned to him and he was shown the image of a "son of a king," anointed for kingship, and he is the one well known. His secret is the form of BQM, the form of ShDY, the Name of Sufficient Power, and his secret name, in the AL-BM [method],³⁶ is YSSH YSSH... For forty years Israel was in gloom; light and darkness, day and night, two, four, the retribution of the limbs, Raziel ben Shmuel is familiar with the blessing and the curse, is acquainted³⁷ with the bastard "son of the menstruating woman," [namely] he is acquainted with Jesus, [and] Mohammed, the Measure of the Moon

in the Frontier of the Sun. Upon them he will build and quarter, in the triangle and from his words you will comprehend wonders, and the honey he gives to taste is the "wisdom of the Names."³⁸

This passage points up a vital affinity between mystical biography and messianic activity. The most important year in Abulafia's literary career and messianic activities was 1280, when he journeyed to the pope and wrote such major works as *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* and *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, as well as prophetic treatises. Abulafia was in his fortieth year, which according to some Jewish traditions is when a person reaches the height of his intellectual capabilities. Indeed, I assume that the phrase *ben ha-Melekh*, "son of a king," stands for the human intellect, often referred to by Abulafia as a son, while the king is the Agent Intellect. We learn from a passage in ecstatic Kabbalah that God told the Kabbalist, using a variety of biblical verses, "Thou art my son, this day I have begotten you" and also 'See now that I, even I am he,' and the secret [of these verses] is the union of the power—i.e. the supernal divine power, called the sphere of prophecy—with the human power, and it is also said: 'I I.'³⁹ The resort to the verse from Psalm 2:7 at the beginning of the quotation is typical of scholarly discussions of the adoption theme in the ancient sacral royalty ideology. But whereas the ancient king was understood to be the corporeal offspring of a divine power, Abulafia and his school emphasized the intellectual affinity between the higher and the lower entities. It is a spiritual birth, or second birth, that is reflected here, allegorically portraying the emergence of the human intellect *in actu* and its mystical union with the supernal intellect, an event that not only is eschatological, in the psychological sense, but also implies a form of intellectual theosis. It does not seem coincidental that precisely in the fortieth year of his life Abulafia embarked on these extraordinarily intensive activities. Here we can feel how a certain period of life can be considered from an intellectual as well as a mystical standpoint as a time of critical development and the beginning of vigorous messianic activity. From this perspective, Abulafia's biography can be seen as a model of the integration of an intense and extraordinary mystical life and an adventurous messianic activity.⁴⁰

It is, therefore, quite plausible that in the writings of the founder of ecstatic Kabbalah a messianic process is understood to occur in the realm of psychological as well as external events. Abulafia refers to himself as the Messiah by using his proper name in gematria: Raziel = 248 = Abraham. His confession that "I am that individual" comes in the context of the discussion that the Messiah has already been born. Moreover, he mentions the vision of the "son of a king," who is none other than himself. On the basis of Abulafia's use of the traditional term *ben David* to point to the Messiah, there is no doubt that the "son of a king" is

the son of David. In other words, Abulafia experienced a vision which included an image of himself as the anointed one. Abulafia is at the same time a prophet of his own messianic status and the Messiah himself. His explicit confession, already at the beginning of the 1280s, that he is the Messiah coincides with his attempt to see the pope and contributes one more proof that the messianic nature of Abulafia's activity in Rome was a result of a prior revelation.

To be sure, Abulafia was by no means the first to invent this transfer of Neoaristotelian philosophy to a messianic understanding of inner processes. He was preceded somewhat by Maimonides himself,⁴¹ but even more clearly by R. Abraham Maimuni, Maimonides' son, who presented a messianic explanation for psychological processes. He also denoted the bodily desires by terms that have messianic overtones such as *Leviathan* and *Satan*. He discussed the Agent Intellect as the entity that can actualize the human intellect and described this procedure in eschatological terms.⁴² Moreover, in a late medieval anonymous work entitled *Midrash 'Aggadah* we find a homily on the verse "Poor and riding upon an ass"⁴³ to the effect that the soul is situated above the material or the meaning of this verse is that the soul can subjugate the body." This is an example of the concept of the Messiah understood in terms of internal rather than external processes, the relations of body and soul.⁴⁴ From this perspective, this is a conspicuous documentation of the enterprise of awarding messianic interpretation to Aristotelian-epistemological concepts during the Middle Ages. In other words, the reception of the Greek intellectualistic concepts by some Jewish thinkers had sometimes taken idiosyncratic forms, reflecting the structure of Jewish thought that invited a more eschatological understanding of the noetic processes.

Abulafia, however, represents an innovation in comparison to the texts of the *Midrash 'Aggadah* and R. Abraham Maimon. This Kabbalist was not just someone who granted philosophical explanations to Jewish eschatological terms, or a commentator on classical texts who had eschatological leanings, but was someone who proclaimed himself a Messiah as well. Ostensibly, we are not dealing solely with commentary and homiletics on Jewish messianic topics with the aid of philosophical concepts. Since Abulafia considered himself to be the Messiah, these spiritual and allegorical explanations of messianic concepts are directed toward Abulafia himself, namely to the nature of his inner life. They are descriptions of what is happening to him as he tries in practice to actualize both his messianic self-awareness and his messianic mission. From this standpoint, Abulafia moved philosophy as a hermeneutical tool, adopted already by others before him to explain concepts without personal implications—at least any that we can detect from their writings—to a more central position. Philosophy supplied terms for the inner processes of a man who saw himself as a Messiah. These

processes can lead someone to a prophetic experience which only they can facilitate one to become a Messiah.

To be sure, Abulafia was not the first Messiah to appear in the Middle Ages. Earlier claimants may even have had a greater influence upon the historical scene than he had. But he is apparently the first Messiah who explicitly told us about his private mystical experiences. This is a phenomenological innovation: a person who conceives himself to be a mystic is also offering himself as a Messiah, or a pretender to the title of Messiah is also a mystic who established his own school. The two aspects should not, however, be seen as mechanically coexisting in one personality, but rather interacting and overlapping experiences. In this context, one should emphasize the relative neglect of magical elements in Abulafia's treatment of a variety of messianic themes. The affinity established between messianism and mysticism weakened, in Abulafia's case, the more traditional affinities between messianism and the magical powers of the Messiah. His general assumption is that magic, in principle, is possible but nevertheless not to be recommended as a desirable form of activity. However, even in the case of the activity of the Messiah he attempts to ignore these traits found in popular apocalyptic messianism. In Abulafia's thought the Messiah should disseminate a certain type of lore—the ecstatic Kabbalah that provides a salvific knowledge which will help others to redeem themselves. It is the noetic act of informing and the rhetoric necessary for persuading, rather than exercising force, that is the thrust of his endeavor.

By this synthesis between messianism and prophecy—the latter standing commonly in his writings for a certain type of ecstasy—Abulafia constructed a new model of understanding messianism in Jewish mysticism. Though this model does not subscribe to most of the apocalyptic elements common in other messianic models, I see no reason not to approach it as an independent and significant messianic model, to pay due attention to its phenomenological structure as well as to its historical influence. In any case, the neglect of the possible contribution of this messianic model to the more variegated developments of Jewish messianism or its description as belonging to "spiritual deviations"⁴⁵ may bring about an academic—and somewhat dogmatic—view of what Jewish messianism was, by reducing it to a monochromatic way of thought.

Abulafia's discussions of the Messiah and his Kabbalistic thought in general differ conspicuously from most of the thirteenth-century Kabbalah by its non-protological nature. By this term, derived from a word coined by Jon Levenson, I mean that the ecstatic Kabbalist was not particularly concerned with matters of the beginning, namely theories of the emanation of the ten *sefirot*, emanation in general, or creation. While Provençal and Catalan Kabbalists, as well as some Castilian ones, paid special attention to these issues, Abulafia was much more concerned with present spiritual attainments which, when achieved, might be

conceived of as matters of the end, as spiritually eschatological. Psychology and techniques to attain the supreme spiritual experiences, more than ontological speculations or sacred history dealing with the *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*, dominate his numerous writings.

Noetic Eschatology

Abulafia was not the first Jewish figure in the thirteenth century to emphasize the present intellectual attainment as the major religious experience. A Provençal philosopher and translator named R. Moses ben Shmuel ibn Tibbon, who apparently was not known to Abulafia, shows how earlier mythologoumena influenced some philosophers and produced a synthesis very close to that of Abulafia's. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* R. Moses writes:

As long as the material intellect was *in potentia* and did not attain the kingdom of God and was anointed with the holy unction, it was called Solomon alone. Then he is neither king nor the "son of David," as it was said that "the son of David" will not come until all the souls of the body are exhausted," neither the king of Jerusalem . . . and the beloved [in the Song of Songs] is the Causa Prima, and the first agent or His emissary and His angel, "whose name is like the name of its Master," which is identical to the Agent Intellect, and is Metatron, and it was counted at the end as the "lesser YHWH," because of the name of its Master, because it has been said that "my name is within it."⁴⁶

The philosopher resorted to speculation typical of the Hebrew *Enoch* in order to point out the similarity between the Agent Intellect and the First Cause, which correspond, respectively, to Metatron and God. This is not, however, solely an ontological description of medieval Neoaristotelianism by means of Heikhalot literature. Prior to this discussion R. Moses mentions the potential human intellect that should be actualized, and the implication is that man's intellect should conjoin with the Agent Intellect, a union that is described in eschatological terms as the arrival of "ben David." Implicitly, Metatron too has been eschatologized, as the archangel is equivalent here to the messianic ben David. To what extent such a passage is a matter of an exegetical move or may betray some intellectualistic-eschatological experiences of the author is a matter of debate. It has to do with how to understand some forms of Jewish philosophies, and I cannot embark here the question of the possible salvific valences of noetic experiences. But the above passage is sufficient to locate this noetic aspect of Abulafia's eschatology closer to the followers of Maimonides than to the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalists.

Despite the fact that Abulafia passed on and did not bring the redemption,

there is no doubt that his conception of a spiritual messianism thrived and remained influential in the generations to follow. There is quite a list of extant discussions that seem to be influenced by the writings and theories of Abulafia. One of the reasons is that his views approximated the philosophical thinking of his day as typified by R. Moses. The other was the fact that his idiosyncratic life did not become the most characteristic aspect of the eschatological scheme he proposed. I will present only one aspect, from an anonymous work dating from the middle of the fifteenth century and apparently composed in Italy.⁴⁷ Following the views of Abulafia, we hear an interesting exposition of messianic concepts through internal modes and philosophical constructs:

The great salvation that is the true salvation and the perfect redemption which after it will never again be an exile will transpire through the agency of two angels.⁴⁸ One is called Elijah and the other the son of David. "Elijah" is an allusion to the intellectual power whereas "son of David" alludes to the prophetic power. The son of David will not come until all the souls of the body are exhausted.⁴⁹ This passage states that the power of prophecy, which is allegorically rendered as the son of David, will not indwell unless all the bodily powers and all the instincts be terminated, in other words be subjugated and acquiescent to the powers of intellect and prophecy.⁵⁰

We can see how a classical Jewish apocalyptic conception which argues for the coming of Elijah before that of the Messiah, the son of David, is given to a philosophical-mystical explanation. Elijah is transformed into a term for the intellect or the power of the intellect that has been actualized. This process of actualization is the prerequisite for the arrival of the son of David, who becomes a metaphor for the prophetic faculty in man. This text exhibits the same type of perception that has as its reference philosophy or psychological-philosophical processes, as a prepositional stage for the actual prophetic phenomenon, all to explain the essence of the Messiah, the son of David. Obviously ben David is not conceived of here to be an historical personality but rather simply a stage in the mystical development of a certain person. When the redemption is finally reached, all of material forces, "all the bodily powers," will be subjugated to the spiritual ones, just as the Messiah-king will behave in history in relation to the foes of God. This is the applied meaning of spiritual messianism: there is to be no substantial change in historical reality, sociological structure, or geographical location of the nation; there is to be an alteration solely in the relationship of the spiritual world to the material world. As long as the spiritual world can rule over the physical or corporeal, then we have the special indicator of the time of the Messiah. Even though it is possible to have the involvement of a historical personality, he is not mentioned and he is not a necessary component of this process. It follows that this specific "messianic idea," the redemption of the

individual, allows for different types of redemption for different people. Redemption depends ultimately on the spiritual perfection of the individual, who alone is responsible for his personal salvific attainment.

This point should be stressed because a dominant theory in modern scholarship denies categorically that Judaism contained a conception of individual salvation or personal messianism before the middle of the eighteenth century. Scholem, for example, asserts that "the question of private or individual redemption is a totally modern dilemma, and does not exist in Jewish tradition before 1750."⁵¹ It is obvious, then, that Abulafia's view marks a radical departure from popular eschatological notions. Here the historical stage is abandoned, at least in two out of three definitions of the term *mashiyah*, which are presented as philosophical processes.⁵² These discussions invite a revision of Scholem's view of messianism, which is inclined to restrict this phenomenon to its apocalyptic forms.⁵³ A similar propensity is evident in the view of religion as presented in the works of Joachim Wach, who emphasized the role of salvation in the general economy of religion. According to Wach, "The presence of a savior is a mark that distinguishes religious from philosophical doctrines of salvation. Philosophical doctrines teach that human beings are saved by their own efforts: religious doctrines proclaim the principle of salvation by another."⁵⁴ This strong distinction between the philosophical and the religious ignores some medieval forms of syntheses between the two forms of spirituality, which attempted to internalize the traditional savior understood as an external factor and to interpret the objective sources of knowledge as the savior, what Wach would call the "other." I suspect that Wach's reduction of the other to a human or a human-divine figure constitutes a bias stemming from his particular religious background. His emphasis on *Grenzsituationen*, those human experiences that reflect the finitude and nothingness of the individual and the necessity of a redemption coming from outside, more precisely as grace, is quite relevant.⁵⁵ They reflect the search for salvation as generated by a feeling of finitude, want, or crisis, in a way reminiscent of some of Scholem's formulations.⁵⁶ No one would deny that *Grenzsituationen* may inspire salvific or messianic aspirations. It would be advisable, however, not to reduce the whole range of messianic models to a total, apocalyptic restructuring of a distorted nature or a terrible history. More positive drives may also be at work in models that are inspired by much more activistic, dynamic approaches fertilized by forms of thought like Aristotelian noetics.

Natural Redemption

Thus far we dealt with the issue of inner, spiritual redemption in the writings of Abraham Abulafia. One would expect this emphasis on the mystical

moment to lead to two antithetical processes. First, an individual who undergoes an extraordinary inner experience is likely to withdraw from taking an active part in community affairs and devote his efforts to his personal redemption. Second, someone who had experienced mystical union with God and received revelations, or prophecy, might envision himself as being capable of effecting catastrophic, historical changes. However, neither of these two possibilities fits the case of Abraham Abulafia. He did in fact play an active role on the historical scene and did not become a recluse; and the changes in the course of history he sought to effect were not at all catastrophic. Abulafia saw historical redemption as a natural process. In his view, the messianic event occurs without the need of any extraordinary intervention from supernatural powers—without breaking the framework of nature.

The first of three explanations Abulafia offers for this process is astrological. In a few of his writings Abulafia repeats an expression that is typical of him alone; the term 'renewal', *hiddush*, in order to describe the re-appearance of a government in Israel. In this context, Abulafia uses the term *memshalah*.⁵⁷ Abulafia's understanding of the concept of renewal is similar to many traditional Jewish understandings of this term: renewal of the month, for example, depends upon the ongoing renewal of the moon, a natural process of constant return to a previously existing condition. Hence the redemption of the government of Israel is a return to a certain situation, just as over the course of time constellations return to previous positions in the sky. From this perspective, Abulafia holds a highly special view of redemption. It would appear that he is not advocating a process in which history reaches its end and then enters a new, irreversible phase of messianic existence from which there is no return to a state of diaspora. Instead he is describing a spiral in which the Jewish people can regain their lost statehood. All this is part of what he conceives to be a natural process that can be compared to the procession of the stars every several thousand years.⁵⁸ This theory of Abulafia's recalls Nietzsche's opinion concerning the recurrence of events (though not in a regular cyclical pattern) an infinite number of times, for eternity.

The second model of the natural interpretation of redemption is Aristotelian. This explanation is based upon the assumption that all potentialities will at some point in time reach their actualizations. The idea is that since time is eternal, it is illogical to suppose that a potential reality will not at some point be actualized. Therefore the notion of Jewish statehood, which is actually an idea that has already proved feasible, must again come to fruition.⁵⁹ The notion of necessary actualization is not unique to Abulafia. Ideas of this type circulated among Jews and Arabs during the Middle Ages through pseudo-epigraphic writings attributed to Aristotle.⁶⁰ Even so, it seems that Abulafia places a stronger emphasis upon this notion than can be found in other compositions, including

pseudo-Aristotelian works, and in the appropriation of R. Yitzhaq ibn Latif, apparently because of his conviction that the actualization of this particular potentiality was to happen in his time, the very decade in which he was writing.

The third interpretive model is concerned with the progressive nature of man. Abulafia's insight into history, dealing the rise and fall of nations, apparently convinced him that the Jewish people could rise again. In his youth, the 1250s and 1260s, the land of Israel was the focal point of a gigantic struggle between the superpowers of the Middle Ages: the Mongols and the Mameluks, in addition to the Crusaders. In an unstable situation such as this it would be fitting to suppose that the Jews could also be integrated in an historical process that would allow them a foothold or even a victory by exploitation of a certain constellation of events. This background of bitter struggle seems to be pertinent to the rise of messianic expectations during times of great international crisis. Abulafia was not the only one to recognize the inherent messianism of this particular historical situation. This is the same background for the thoughts of R. Yehudah ha-Levi when he pondered the success of the Crusaders in capturing the land of Israel. This perspective also relates to the modern Zionist ideal, which flourished and gained strength while another great power, Britain, to occupied Israel. These international struggles seemed to foster among the Jewish people underlying expectations of political and military activism. As long as the international situation remained stable, the Jews had very little chance of regaining political power.

The contemplation of human nature, in the ways in which nations rise and fall, is strong in Abulafia's writings. In *Sefer ha-Melammed*, for example, he states: "Even what will happen in the future, such as the coming of the Messiah and the kingdom of Israel, are not impossibilities or to be denied logically, because thus we see every day with the nations of the world. Sometimes these have dominion over those (and vice versa), and this is not a matter that nature can deny but rather human nature decrees that it be so."⁶¹

Abulafia's theory of human nature had a certain historical influence. At the end of the thirteenth century a Jewish intellectual, R. Joseph Caspi of Provence, raised the possibility of the reestablishment of the Jewish state on the basis of his contemplation of the rise and fall of nations throughout history. It is likely that through Caspi this idea later appeared in a composition of Spinoza's, as has been suggested by Shlomo Pines.⁶² Spinoza suggested that a Jewish state might be founded under particular political conditions. An historical affinity between Abulafia and Caspi is likely, for the latter was indeed aware of another work of Abulafia's as well.⁶³ This could explain how Spinoza came to know this concept.

These three interpretations, the astrological-repetitive, the Aristotelian-probabilistic, and the ecstatic-spiritualistic, possess a common denominator.

Unlike the popular outlooks, as presented in Jewish eschatological works produced during the talmudic period and in the early Middle Ages, Abulafia does not advocate a disruption of nature as a necessary condition for messianic redemption, but rather calls for the fruition of its hidden potentials. This development indicates a rise of a certain special train of thought that is more characteristic of the second elite among the Jews in the Middle Ages than of popular thought that tended to link redemption to a total disruption in history and in nature.

Abulafia's views of inner redemption and outer nature are quite similar. In both, what is referred to is the actualization of something that is already in potentia. Redemption of the soul or of the intellect does not disrupt the spiritual development of a person but rather brings that endeavor to its final perfection. It is an ongoing process of evolution, much like explanations of objective nature. The changes that occur in both the inner and outer natures can be understood as processes that do not require a disruption of their respective frameworks.

New Year, Anointment, Messianism

Abulafia composed books in a variety of literary genres. A *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, works on the secrets included in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and on *Sefer Yetzirah*; mystical handbooks which deal with the required techniques to reach ecstatic experiences; and "prophetic books" which record the revelations he experienced. All but one of the prophetic books have been lost, but the commentaries he wrote on them are extant. Most of these prophetic books and commentaries were written around 1280, the year when Abulafia planned to meet the pope. Indeed, the more interesting messianic expressions used by Abulafia occur precisely in those dense and concise booklets. Let me focus on just one passage, found in the commentary on *Sefer ha-'Edut*, a book originally composed in Rome in 1280, where he records, two years later, what he heard from the supernal realm:

He said that he was in Rome at that time, and they told him what was to be done and what was to be said in his name, and that he tell everyone that "God is king, and shall stir up the nations," and the retribution[!] of those who rule instead of Him. And He informed him that he was king and he changed [himself] from day to day, and his degree was above that of all degrees, for in truth he was deserving of such. But he returned and again made him take an oath when he was staying in Rome on the river Tiber. . . . And the meaning of his saying: "Rise and lift up the head of my anointed one"—refers to the life of the souls. "And on the New Year" and "in the temple"—it is the power of the souls. And he says: "Anoint him as a king"—rejoice in him like a king with the power of all the names. "For I have anointed him as a king over Israel"—over the communities of Israel, that is the commandments. And his

saying: "and his name I have called Shadday, like My Name"—whose secret is Shadday like My Name, and understand all the intention. Likewise his saying, "He is I and I am He," and it cannot be revealed more explicitly than this. But the secret of the "corporeal name" is the "Messiah of God." Also "Moses will rejoice," which he has made known to us, and which is the five urges, and I called the corporeal name as well . . . now Raziel started to contemplate the essence of the Messiah and he found it and recognized it and its power and designated it David, the son of David, whose secret is Yimelokh."⁶⁴

Between quotation marks I have put those phrases I believe are from the original but now lost prophetic book upon which Abulafia is commenting. Abulafia received a series of commands dealing with the installation and anointment of the Messiah in the Temple on the Jewish New Year. This presumably happened in Barcelona, the very city where, some few years earlier, Nahmanides formulated his view on the Messiah's revelation in Rome. The anointment as king is connected here explicitly with the New Year.

Indeed, Abulafia insisted on meeting the pope on the eve of the New Year, and shortly after mentioning it he wrote the above passage.⁶⁵ Thus, the revelation about the installation of Abulafia as the king-Messiah and the attempt to meet the pope coincide. The anointment at the time of the New Year recalls an ancient Near Eastern ritual that had also been adopted, according to some scholars, by the ancient Israelites, when the king was installed.⁶⁶ The king referred to here is quite explicitly a messianic figure. Thus, we may learn something more about the self-perception of Abulafia from the revelation he received on the very day he went to see the pope. The proximity of planned events suggests that his visit to Rome may even have entailed not only a scholastic discussion about the nature of Judaism qua mysticism but also an attempt to be recognized and even be crowned the king-Messiah by the pope himself. If this conjecture is correct, may we assume that "the temple" (*miqdash*) is none other than St. Peter, where he intended to meet the pope on the eve of the New Year.

This hypothesis may illuminate the significance of Abulafia's use of the *topos* of the Messiah's coming to Rome in order to become an actual Messiah. It is also pertinent to point out the possible impact of the influential apocalyptic book *Sefer Zerubbavel* on the emergence of the role of Rome as the locus of the messianic advent. The book contains an important episode concerning the revelation of the Messiah and of Metatron to Zerubbavel ben She'altiel in Rome. In this revelation the Messiah appeared to the pseudopigraphic writer as a despised and wounded man, and then he transformed himself into an appearance "like a youth [*na'ar*] in the perfection of his beauty and pleasing, a young man the like of whom there is none."⁶⁷ In Abulafia's text the term *na'ar* describes both the Messiah ben David and Metatron. If Abulafia was acquainted with *Sefer*

Zerubbavel, it might have made encouraged him to expect a messianic revelation in Rome. If this conjecture is correct, the passage from *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, a book which was composed in 1280, apparently in Rome, allows the possibility that Rome may have constituted not only the place of a confrontation between the Messiah and the pope, but also the place of an eschatological revelation for both Abulafia and the author of *Sefer Zerubbavel*.

This eschatological scenario has been interpreted by Abulafia himself as dealing not only with an historical event but also with another one, accessible by means of allegory. Anointment is related to the spiritualization of the religious life, the "life of the souls" (*hayyei ha-nefashot*). This spiritual view is reflected in the title of one of Abulafia's commentaries on the secrets of Maimonides' *Guide*: *Hayyei ha-Nefesh* intended to redeem readers by divulging the secrets of the *Guide*, which were treated as the secrets of the Torah.⁶⁸ In fact, this redemption is formulated in extreme mystical phrases which presuppose a mystical union between the mystic-Messiah and God: "He is I and I am He."⁶⁹ The messianic mission is conceived on a double plane: the spiritual one, consisting of an anointment by God which is tantamount to a strong mystical experience, and the corporeal, consisting of designation as king of the communities of Israel. Yet even the term *yisra'el* should not be understood here in its plain sense alone. In several discussions in Abulafia's writings it stands for the numerical value 541—for the Agent Intellect, *sekhel ha-po'el*—and this gematria is quite important in the passage under discussion. In other words, an external event that Abulafia hoped will take place—his coronation, actual or allegorical—may be seen as more consonant with popular forms of eschatology, and in some cases even with the apocalyptic mode.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the spiritual interpretations of these aspirations have been inserted, consciously or not, into the very formulation of external messianism, both by allegory and by numerology. In other words, Abulafia's discourse involves two different registers: one apocalyptic, apparently the result of an earlier revelation, the other allegorical. While the former is much more dynamic, using more verbs and describing a drama evolving in a certain time and place, the spiritual allegoresis is more static, marked by a greater resort to nouns. While the first register is more temporally bound, the second appears to describe atemporal experiences. The corporeal, external events that are described by the "original" revelation serve as a text that, like the biblical stories, should be allegorized in order to point to inner, spiritual experiences. Even so, the spiritual interpretation, inspired by an axiology that prefers what Frank and Fritzie Manuel called the *eupsychia* to the *euchronia*, did not displace the allegorical, at least not explicitly. In fact, the more archaic axis, based upon sacred geography and time as well as hypostatic entities, was at least rhetorically preserved.

Metatron: Yaho'el, hu' ha-Go'el, Ben, Enoch

According to some scholars, already in pre-Christian forms of Judaism it is possible to detect a hypostatic angelic power which was granted the name of God and sometimes plays an eschatological role. This is true insofar as the Son of Man some of the early angelic conceptions of Jesus are concerned. In earlier Jewish texts the angel Metatron was conceived of as having a redeeming function. Some of these views are related to the redemptive role of God's leading angel, who possessed the divine name, in Exodus 23:20-21, or the expression "the redemptive angel," *ha-mal'akh ha-go'el*, in Genesis 48:16 or Isaiah 63:9. It stands to reason that these powers are nothing but angelophanies that represent the divine intervention in history. It is the divine name that is sometimes described as present within these angelic manifestations, which are devoid of proper names. The later Jewish eschatologies resorted to the redemptive role of these angelic powers in order to build up their own vision of the end. From this point of view, an important aspect of medieval eschatology—Kabbalistic, philosophical, and that of Hasidei Ashkenaz—should be better understood as different interpretations of ancient mythologoumena.

In my opinion, Abulafia must have been acquainted with some of the literary formulations of this development. He not only quoted some of the extant texts related to it but also claimed to have encountered some of those angelic powers as part of his own mystical experiences. In his greatest commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, *Sitrei Torah*, we read:⁷¹

The thing that is actualizing our intellect from its potentiality is an intellect which is called in our language by many names, and it is the prince of the world, and Metatron, the angel of the [divine] Face . . . and its name is Shadday, like the name of its master, and its cognomen is Metatron . . . and it is wise, [and] speaking,⁷² the universal spirit, which has been called by the philosophers the Agent Intellect . . . and the divine Spirit, and Shekhinah, and the faithful Spirit, and the kingdom of Heaven⁷³ . . . and in our language the intellect has been designated by the [terms] *mal'akh* and *keruv*, and in some places it will be called 'Elohim, as we have said concerning the fact that its name is like that of its master, and behold the sages have called it Enoch and said that, "Enoch Is Metatron" . . . and the first name out of the seventy names of Metatron is Yaho'el whose secret is Ben . . . and its name is 'Eliyahu⁷⁴ and it is also the explicit name Yod Yod Vav,⁷⁵ which is the double name . . . and behold, it also "is the Redeemer" (*hu ha-go'el*) and it is "in the whole" (*ba-kol*) of "your heart," (*libbekha*) and it is the ruler of the world.⁷⁶

In this passage Abulafia draws upon a still unparalleled version of a *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, which he attributes here to R. Eleazar of Worms. The correctness of this attribution has been questioned,⁷⁷ but certainly

the text was written by an Ashkenazi figure who preceded Abulafia by at least decades. There are several differences between the manuscripts that preserved this early thirteenth-century text and its quotation by Abulafia, but I shall analyze in the version found in *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, where the explicit claim of the author is that he adduces a verbatim-quotation, not a paraphrase.

Abulafia's version of the Ashkenazi text links by gematria several concepts *Ben* = 'Eliyahu = Yaho'el = *hu' ha-Go'el* = *ba-kol* = *libbekha* = *Yod Yod Vav* = *YHWH + YHWH* = 52. There can be no doubt that gematria was as essential for creating this equation as the eventual conceptual relations between its members. What is conspicuously absent in the Ashkenazi discussion is any intellectual-hypostatic status of Metatron, characteristic of Abulafia's writings. The archangel is described in stock traditional and mythical forms of late ancient and early medieval Judaism. The name Yaho'el is known from the ancient Jewish apocryphal literature, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.⁷⁸ This angel was superseded by Metatron, and some of the former's attributes have been transferred to the latter.⁷⁹ Moreover, very ancient material related to Yaho'el survived for more than a millennium and surfaced in Ashkenazi literature.⁸⁰ Is this also the case for the relation between Yaho'el and the concept of redeemer? Only a tentative answer can be offered. It is not certain how relevant Abulafia's version is. Moreover, it might be claimed that relations between the disparate elements put together by the Ashkenazi author by the artificial means of gematria may not reflect any earlier correlation. Nevertheless, the linkage between the terms should be addressed as Abulafia has formulated it.⁸¹

Though the phrase *hu' ha-go'el* is not found in the Ashkenazi manuscripts of *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, the whole context of the sentence adduced by Abulafia describes Yaho'el as present in some critical moments in the history of the Jews, such as the Exodus: he was the messenger that saved the Jews at the Red Sea.⁸² Thus, Yaho'el is identified with the anonymous angel that led the people of Israel into the desert, as the nexus between its theophoric name and the biblical view of the presence of the name of God within that angel demonstrates.⁸³ The assumption that Metatron's name is like that of his master reflects in fact a similar statement related to Yaho'el.⁸⁴ The angel of the divine presence, by dint of the dwelling of the divine name in it, is a redemptive entity by definition, and I see the occurrence of the gematria more as a technical issue which reflects a logic of the role attributed to Yaho'el. The Ashkenazi text assumes that Metatron, via Yaho'el, is related to the idea of sonship, *ben*; it is strongly connected to the divine name, either in the theophoric name of the angel Yaho'el or because of the significance of the much less clear formula *yod yod vav*, or because fifty-two is twice the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton. Several scholars have drawn attention to the affinities between certain ancient views regarding Jesus and Yaho'el.⁸⁵ The

eschatological aspect of this constellation of hints, however, is crucial for our discussion here. Metatron is portrayed, according to Abulafia's quotation, which I accept as reliably preserving an earlier tradition, as the Redeemer.

The occurrence of the Redeemer in Abulafia's quotation is, I believe, part of the original vision of the Ashkenazi text and its source. This conclusion is corroborated by the eschatological implication of the figure of Elijah, as well as by the possibility of the occurrence of the phrase *yeshu'a sar ha-panim*, "Yeshua, Prince of the Face," which has been identified by Yehuda Liebes as a reference to Jesus Christ.⁸⁶ Liebes's proposal, originally based on the Ashkenazi text which does not contain the phrase *hu' ha-go'el*, is therefore corroborated by Abulafia's version. In my opinion, both Abulafia's passage and the Ashkenazi one reflect a more complete version, which combined the two phrases. If this conjecture is correct, than an early text treating Metatron as identical to Yaho'el, Yeshu'a Sar ha-Panim, Ben, Go'el, and the high priest was in existence before the extant versions but underwent at least two forms of censorship, which produced the two versions. How early such a text was is difficult to calculate. Whether this text reflects a pre-Christian Jewish concept of the angelic son who possesses or constitutes the divine name is also hard to ascertain. If late, the Christian, or Jewish-Christian, nature of such a Hebrew text cannot be doubted.

For the term *ben*, the justification proposed by the Ashkenazi manuscripts is not only a matter of numerical equivalence but is also related to the term *ben 'adam*, "man" or more literally "son of man," much as Metatron is the translation of Enoch, who was a man.⁸⁷ In fact, this justification is sufficient in the type of associative reasoning characteristic of the Ashkenazi texts based on gematria. This description, however, deserves a second look. The *ben* in the expression *ben 'adam* may be a reminder of the human extraction of Metatron qua Enoch, namely of his status before the translation. But this explanation, offered explicitly by the text, may reflect an earlier and different understanding of the nature of the Son. It may stand for an earlier perception of an ontological hypostasis possessing messianic overtones, named the Son of Man, known in ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypticism,⁸⁸ which reflects in the later sources the achievement of Enoch when he becomes Metatron. In the *Hebrew Enoch* (Chap. XLVIII, C, 7) God describes His relationship with the translated Enoch as that of a father. Such an assumption is corroborated by the view already found in the Ethiopian Enoch 71:5, where the patriarch describes a heavenly entity called Son of Man, which is also the eschatological judge of the world, an attribute found also in the Ashkenazi text.⁸⁹ I am inclined to see the sonship as reflecting the hypostatic Metatron rather than the righteous Enoch. If this view is correct, than the Ashkenazi material preserves a much earlier tradition on Enoch's ascent and translation. Already in 4 Ezra 7:27–30 God refers to the

Messiah as His son.⁹⁰ This sonship is interpreted by Abulafia in several discussions as dealing with the transformation of the mystic by means of the actualization of the intellect, produced by the illumination of Metatron, the Agent Intellect. While Enoch has become an angel by the elevation of his body, for Abulafia someone becomes a son in his spirit.⁹¹ Different as these forms of sonship are, the Ashkenazi passage and Abulafia's numerous discussions expressed these sonships in the context of the same earlier figures, 'Eliyahu and Enoch, and earlier traditions.

It is difficult to prove to what extent Abulafia is drawing upon earlier stands. He belongs to what I call the innovative impulse of Kabbalah, an approach that allows the Kabbalist much greater room for creativity than earlier. Nevertheless, provided that he explicitly relies on an Ashkenazi text whose formulation is not matched by the available manuscripts, it may be assumed that he could get access to views that are less conspicuous in the extant versions of the passage Abulafia quoted, or to additional material that could inspire him to emphasize the sonship motif.

We may assume, for example, that the importance of sonship was found even in philosophical texts in relation to Metatron, as we learn from a passage written by Abulafia's younger contemporary, R. Levi ben Abraham, a Provençal philosopher:

"Tell me what is His name" [Proverbs 30:4] because granted that His essence is incomprehensible [to anyone] but to Him, it is written [His] name in lieu of Himself. "What is the name of His son" [ibid.] hints at the separate intellect [namely Agent Intellect] that acts in accordance to His commandment, and it is Metatron, "whose name is the name of his Master" [BT, *Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b], and he [Metatron] also has difficulties in comprehending His true essence [*'amitato*] and in figuring out His essence [*letzayyer mahuto*] . . . the [separate] intellects are called His son, because of their proximity to Him and the fact that He created them without any intermediary.⁹²

It seems that Abulafia shares with the Provencal philosopher as much as he does with the Ashkenazi author: the identification of Metatron with the Son of God, in a context explicitly mentioning the divine name. H. A. Wolfson has claimed that "in the history of philosophy an immediate creation of God has been sometimes called a son of God. Thus Philo describes the intelligible world, which was an immediate creation of God and created by Him from eternity."⁹³ If Wolfson is correct, then we may speak about a line of thought, independent of the christological sonship, that could have affected Abulafia's understanding of the Agent Intellect as the Son of God and as Metatron.

Metatron as the Son is also mentioned elsewhere in the work of Abulafia's

school,⁹⁴ and, as Ch. Wirszubski has shown, Abulafian passages on Metatron and the Son were translated into Latin and become influential in Christian Kabbalah.⁹⁵ Indeed, the history (yet to be written) of the reception of the Metatronic constellations of ideas in Judaism would probably enable us to understand the significant impact of the various avatars of the figure of Enoch. The "Enoch movement," to use J. J. Collins's term,⁹⁶ did not completely disappear in late antiquity. By the mediation of the Enochic themes—which survived in Hebrew in the Heikhalot literature, in the succinct talmudic discussions concerning Metatron, the targumic discussions of the Son of Man as Messiah⁹⁷ and in fragmented mythologoumena transmitted into the Middle Ages, as the apocalyptic literature where Metatron reveals eschatological secrets and literature related to the seventy names of Metatron, or via the astrological and magical literatures,⁹⁸ or perhaps even additional material was available to some Kabbalists and conceived as later fabrications⁹⁹—the apotheotic impulse became more and more accentuated. It was backed in the thirteenth century by the individualistic tendencies that were related to Greek philosophy and reverberated in Christian Kabbalah when combined with christological speculation. Enoch and Metatron were still invoked as part of the apotheotic ideal, and numerous passages in eighteenth-century Hasidism deal with the extraordinary mystical achievement of Enoch the shoemaker. In fact, owing to the influence of Kabbalah, both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hasidism and nineteenth-century Mormonism have adopted Enochic elements and represent, to a certain extent, an echo of the Enochic movement.¹⁰⁰

The redemptive role of Metatron is attested long before the Ashkenazi texts. The insertion of the figure of the Redeemer required some mathematical legerdemain, as the anonymous author had to add the pronoun *hu'* in order to link numerically the idea of the redeemer, *ha-go'el*, to the series. Thus, it is quite reasonable to assume that the Ashkenazi writer attempted to offer a numerical justification for an idea already in existence, which presumably linked Metatron, Sonship, the divine name, and a redemptive figure. In the context of the dictum that "Enoch is Metatron," as in the Ashkenazi text as well as Abulafia (in the lines immediately following the above passage), and even more against the background of the ascent in the Hebrew Enoch with its description of Enoch's enthronement as the angel Metatron,¹⁰¹ we are faced with another Jewish version of the royal ideology. Sonship, leadership, enthronement, the granting of a divine name, and the eschatological role—all these together when related to the same human being are reminiscent of important aspects of the Mesopotamian pattern. If we add the motif of anointment mentioned in the Slavonic Book of Enoch and its possible reverberation in a certain form in Abraham Abulafia's book *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, we may speak about a constellation of themes,

described by some scholars (especially G. Widengren) as characteristic of the sacral royalty ideology.¹⁰²

The constellation of ideas described above in the context of Yaho'el is, however, more than a continuation of speculations on themes that stem from hoary antiquity. In my opinion, in Abulafia's writings there is ample evidence to claim an experiential encounter with Yaho'el. In the most important apocalyptic writing extant, *Sefer ha-'Or*, Abulafia reports a lengthy vision dealing with apocalyptic wars and asks God for an explanation of the meaning of his vision:

My Lord, tell me the solutions¹⁰³ of the wars I have seen in a vision.¹⁰⁴ And he showed me an old man, with white hair, seated upon the throne of judgment . . . and He told me: Go and ask that man who sits on the mountain of judgment and he will tell you and announce to you what are those wars and what is their end, because he is out of your nation. And I have ascended to the mountain of judgment and come close to the elder man and I fell on my face towards the earth before his legs, and he placed his two hands upon me and he stood me upon my legs before him and said to me: "My son, blessed is your coming, peace, peace unto you" . . . "And my name [is] Yaho'el, that I have agreed¹⁰⁵ to speak with you now, several years and this is the reason your name will be Ro'u'y'el¹⁰⁶ the visionary, the son of Meqor'el¹⁰⁷ . . . and the name of the fifth [hamiyshiy] king is Meshiyhy,¹⁰⁸ and he will be a king after the end of the time of the four kingdoms."¹⁰⁹

There can be no doubt that the fifth king is the Messiah. The fourth is the elder man, who was described as belonging to the nation of Abulafia. On the other hand, the elder man presented himself as Yaho'el. I take the two hints as pointing to 'Eliyahu, who is a permutation of Yaho'el. Indeed, 'Eliyahu, the fourth, precedes the Messiah, the fifth. If we accept the statement attributed to Yaho'el at its face value, this angel had already been revealing himself to Abulafia for years. Moreover, he addresses the mystic as a son, an issue that is reminiscent of the adoption theory in Abulafia's thought, as well as the occurrence of the term *ben*. The discussion in *Sefer ha-'Or* between Abulafia, whose personal name is Abraham, and Yaho'el, recalls the sole other conversation of this angel with a human being, that found in the Apocalypse of Abraham, where again it is Abraham who is his partner in a revelatory dialogue.¹¹⁰ Is this similarity a matter of coincidence? May we assume that Abulafia or his medieval sources had access to the ancient apocalypse, just as some Jewish authors between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries had access to ancient Jewish writings unknown in the rabbinic writings beforehand?¹¹¹

Indeed, Abulafia's experience should be understood on two levels. First are the figurative visions, in which external events are interpreted eschatologically—in the present case pointing to the final battles between three kings, which are followed by the advent of Yaho'el-'Eliyahu and then the Messiah himself. On a

second level, Abulafia would interpret both his vision and its eschatological interpretation allegorically, as dealing with internal spiritual processes, or processes taking place between the human intellect and the Agent Intellect. The eschatological scenario turns into a spiritual biography that addresses psychological events, which are much less restricted to a special time and space. In fact, the "external" drama described above should be understood in purely Docetic terms, in keeping with Maimonides' assumption of the nature of the prophetic vision. Abulafia would never claim to have seen the visions he describes with his carnal eyes. In this inner process, the imaginary drama is then interpreted on two additional levels, the eschatological and the spiritual. The second opens the way for a more democratic distribution of spiritual achievements, as we learn from another important text which involves the idea of sonship:

Therefore, it is possible for a person who enjoys the radiance of the Shekhinah in this world to be without food for forty days and forty nights, like Moses and 'Eliyahu.¹¹² And the secret of the names of both of them is known to you, and he combines one with the other: first Moses, and then 'Eliyahu, and their combination emerges as a divine name, and it is in its secret [meaning] the "name of the son," and he is the "son of God," and its secret meaning is *ba-neshamah*. And the invisible letters of MoSheH are Me-'Ayin, which declares that "I am from God" [or "from the Name," *'aniy me-ha-shem*] . . . 'Eliyahu is 'Elohiy and it is said "for he is mine"¹¹³ . . . and the gematria of 'Eliyahu is Ben and see that his secret is "Son of Man" [*ben 'adam*].¹¹⁴

Abulafia invokes here the two most extreme instances of ascetic practice and mystical experience in the Bible. At the same time, however, he assumes that they are "possible for a person who enjoys the radiance of the Shekhinah in this world," which I read as assuming that most people, if not everyone, are in principle able to attain such an experience. Moreover, the ecstatic Kabbalist offers an anagrammatic reading of the names of Moses and Elijah, as Mosheh 'Eliyahu point to *shem ha-'elohiy*—the divine name—and, according to another permutation and a gematria, to *ben ha-shem*, namely, the "son of the name" or the "son of God," and *shem ha-ben*, the "name of the son". The mystical experience is therefore apotheotic, transforming the mystic into the son of God, as he is nourished now by the radiance of the Shekhinah, in the mythical parlance of the Midrash, or intelligizes the Agent Intellect according to the Neoaristotelian nomenclature. The inner experience indeed takes place within the soul, *ba-neshamah*. Again, the divine name, 'Eliyahu, and the son occur together, as part of the constellation of ideas found in the Ashkenazi passage analyzed above. *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, from which the last quotation was taken, was written shortly after *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, where Abulafia quoted from the *Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, perhaps even within a year. Therefore, there can be

no doubt that the speculations in *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* too were influenced by the Ashkenazi treatise, as corroborated by the resort to one of the seventy names of Metatron, Yefeifyah, the "Prince of the Torah," in the very same context as the above passage.

In this context, influenced as it is by the Ashkenazi numerical speculations, the phrase *ben 'adam*, "Son of Man," occurs, dealing not with the human situation but with the affinities between the extraordinary individuals, Moses and Elijah, and God or His Name. However, Abulafia's discussions in *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* should be understood as prescriptive, pointing to the importance of a mystical way of life, and the gist of this book is to offer a detailed technique for achieving the mystical in this world, an experience that was described in explicit messianic terms.

Another instance of the reverberation of the Ashkenazi text in Abulafia's mysticism occurs in his *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, where he confesses that he would keep secret but nevertheless disclose only some very general principles of Kabbalah, unless certain circumstances obtained:

What is compelling me is a divine ['elohiy] issue, and some of his secret has been revealed [in the expression] "Enoch, son of Yared"¹¹⁵ who came in the form of an intellectual preacher¹¹⁶ and spoke within us¹¹⁷ and brought consolation upon our heart, and we have been consoled—we would remain silent, just as our ancient masters, blessed be their memory. And it is known that 'Eliyahu, whose name is Yaho'el, will not reveal himself to the wicked, but to the righteous one alone . . . who is the 'counters of His name' [*hoshevei shemo*] too. And likewise Enoch, son of Yared, will not reveal himself but to men of truth, those who hate greed, those who are wise men, and acquainted with this divine lore alone, and do not believe anything else. And know that 'Eliyahu and Enoch will come together at one time,¹¹⁸ having one advice altogether, and they are the harbingers in truth . . . and they will disclose sciences which are very alien today to the wise men of Israel, who are acquainted with the lore of the Talmud.¹¹⁹

Thus again Abulafia confesses that he received a revelation from Enoch ben Yared, who is none other than Metatron. It is this revelation that convinced him to disclose Kabbalistic secrets which have conspicuous eschatological overtones, as mention of the advent of 'Eliyahu and Enoch demonstrates. It is therefore his Kabbalah, the "divine lore" he refers to, which ensures the reception of a revelation and then the disclosure of secrets. In *Sefer ha-'Olam* the throne of judgment is connected with the two divine attributes by which the world is governed. Metatron himself is at times depicted as possessing contradictory characteristics, as we find in a short passage by R. Reuven Tzarfati, a Kabbalist influenced by Abulafia: "The Agent Intellect, which is Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, has two impulses, that is, two angels—one appointed over mercy, and one over judgment—

and this refers to the angels 'Azriel and 'Azah."¹²⁰ This dialectical understanding is evidently connected with the perception of Enoch as having both good and bad qualities, and it is found already in a Midrash.¹²¹

Another issue that is found both in one of the versions of the Ashkenazi *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* and in Abulafia is the continuum between the hypostatical entity and the human mystic. In the *Commentary*, as preserved in the extant manuscripts, there is a play on the same five consonants in the names Yaho'el, 'Eliyahu, ve-'Elohaiy. The relation between the three words generated by the permutation of letters is described in these manuscripts as follows: "to whomever 'Eliyahu is revealing himself, it is from the power of Yaho'el and ve-'Elohaiy."¹²² Therefore, 'Eliyahu is an angelic power which reveals itself by dint of the higher angelic power, Yaho'el, and, to my mind, God,¹²³ referred to here by the term ve-'Elohaiy; namely, 'Eliyahu reveals himself by the power of both 'Yaho'el and "my God." This type of linguistic reference presupposes a certain type of connectedness between the three entities hinted at by the same linguistic material. Whether these three versions of the five consonants indeed reflect more specific and stable ontological levels, for example a possible identity between Yaho'el and divine glory, is still a matter of investigation.¹²⁴

Abulafia, or his Ashkenazi version, did not retain all three permutations but mentions only 'Eliyahu and Yaho'el. Nevertheless, I assume that the concept of a certain type of continuity between the three elements was retained, in another form, in a passage that immediately follows the quotation, where the ecstatic Kabbalist alludes to another form of ontological continuity. Abulafia assumes that divinity is a pure intellect, while Metatron is the Agent Intellect and man a potential intellect. In my opinion, this intellectual continuum is related to the words Abulafia adduced as part of the quotation from the Ashkenazi treatise, where he refers to the words *ba-kol*, "in everything," and *libbekha*, "your heart." These words point to a form of immanence, linguistic in origin but understood by Abulafia as more intellectualistic and ontological at the same time. Abulafia emphasizes that an angel is an influx and a messenger.¹²⁵ Indeed, an immanentist propensity is also evident in another interpretation of the sentence "Enoch is Metatron," found in another commentary of Abulafia's on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, entitled *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, where he interprets the divine name Shadday, related to Enoch-Metatron, as an entity expanding throughout reality.¹²⁶ To put these topics in more general terms: the occurrence of the term *go'el* as an attribute of Metatron and Abulafia's interpretation of it in a transcendent-ontological manner point to the median function of the hypostatic redeemer, on the one hand, and to the omnipresence of the radiation of the transcendental Messiah, on the other. Thus, a vertical approach to legitimizing messianism has been created: someone may become the Messiah not because he is of Davidic

descent, nor because his soul is a transmigration of the soul of the Messiah—both horizontal explanations—but because he is able to plug in the omnipresent and incessantly active supernal intellectual structure by means of acts of intellection and ecstasy.

In another short discussion of the theme of Yaho'el a different form of relationship is established. in *Sefer Ner 'Elohim*, a treatise written by a follower of Abulafia's, the anonymous Kabbalist interprets the verse "from my flesh I shall see God"¹²⁷ as follows: "Mibesar-Y 'Ehezech 'Eloahah, whose secret is Libby¹²⁸ and know and unify the Y with 'Eloha and you shall find 'Eliyahu and Yaho'el and it [amounts to] Ben."¹²⁹ Here the assumption is that God, 'Eloha, is numerically identical to "my heart," and together with Y, they point to Yaho'el and 'Eliyahu. In other words, both angelic powers are described as part of a revelatory experience—'ehezech, "I shall see"—which unites visionarily the heart with God. In Abulafia, the eschatological valences of Enoch, the protagonist of the ancient Jewish Enochic literature, itself influenced by Mesopotamian themes, have been recaptured by the mediation of a variety of motifs spread over the Jewish sources. Unlike the pseudepigraphic genre of the earlier apocalyptic literature, however, Abulafia was ready to resort to the "I am" formula, and even resorted (see appendix 1) to the form *ego*, though in a veiled manner. And in another passage quoted above, he or someone from his group resorted to the formula "I, I," in order to point to the relation between the human and the divine.

The possible impact of the Ashkenazi material, which likely preserved much older material, on the Spanish Kabbalist may open an additional vista onto the circulation of messianic ideas. Unlike the dominant view that the Spanish thinkers were more messianically oriented, in the case of one of the most prominent among them there is good reason to suppose at least a certain sort of influence coming from Ashkenazi circles. The above quotation is, insofar as Abulafia is concerned, part of a much deeper appropriation of Ashkenazi intense use of gematria, and this type of calculation played an important role in Abulafia's writings. It should also be mentioned that another messianic issue, the computation of texts from Daniel in a manner reminiscent of that of the Ashkenazi author R. 'Efrayim ben Shimshon, can be detected in Abulafia's writings.¹³⁰

Mashiyah and Kohen

The ecstatic Kabbalist adopted the view, quite rare in the Jewish Middle Ages, that the Messiah is also Kohen, a priest.¹³¹ In his *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, a commentary on Exodus, Abulafia interprets the verse "Until the Kohen will stand for [the sake of] 'urim and tummim' [Ezra 2:63]: and the secret I possess is that I am a Kohen from the side of my wife, and I am a Levi from the side of my

mother, and Israel from the side of my father, blessed be his memory, and despite the fact that the primary order has been changed, in accordance with the thought of the intellect there is no change, for whoever knows the secret of "Melchizedek, the king of Shalem, brought bread and wine, and he is priest to the High God" [Genesis 14:18]."¹³² This rare autobiographical description is quite uncharacteristic of Abulafia's writings. It is obvious that he is striving to find a connection to a form of priesthood, and by invoking the pedigree of his wife he offers a very weak argument indeed, as he himself understood. In Judaism, the wife's lineage does not confer any status on her husband. Thus, we learn about an unusual theory as to the combined nature of the Messiah as Israel, Levi, and Kohen at the same time. It is also conspicuous, however, that the main concern of the Kabbalist is to show that someone, like Melchizedek, who predated the Aharonite tribe by centuries, may nevertheless be a priest because, as I understand his position, he is connected to God the Most High. Therefore his type of worship and the nature of his God may confer on him the title of Kohen more than his extraction does. Moreover, Melchizedek was a marginal figure in Jewish religion, though he was more prominent in Christianity, where his name has been connected to the Christ and to the function of high priest.¹³³ Elsewhere, Abulafia offers another picture of the relations between the three religious classes in Israel: "The more noble man in his species is Israel, . . . and the most noble of Israel is Levi, and the most of Levi is the priest, and the most noble of the priest is the Messiah, who is the high priest, who is the greatest among his brethren, and knows the [divine] name and blesses the people of Israel by dint of the Explicit Name in the Temple and by its cognomen in the country,¹³⁴ according to the *qabbalah*".¹³⁵"¹³⁶

One of the central functions of the high priest, the ritual of pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, has been transferred here to the Messiah.¹³⁷ Indeed, the shift from the high priest to the Messiah is not so difficult to understand, as there was a ritual of anointment in the case of the priests, and the expression *ha-kohen ha-mashiyyah* is found in the Bible.¹³⁸ However, while in the biblical context it pointed solely to the present, officiating priest without implying any salvific role (this is also the way the function is portrayed in the rabbinic literature), for Abulafia the term *mashiyyah* stands for the Savior figure. The above passage from *Sefer Mafteah ha-Shemot* should then be understood to say that the priest who will stand until *'urim* and *tummim*—which in Abulafia's writings and some earlier sources mean the divine names (Leviticus 4:3)¹³⁹—is none other than the Messiah, who will be present when the Temple is rebuilt and the technique of linguistic divination reestablished.

Moreover, elsewhere Abulafia claims that he possesses a Kabbalistic tradition that God will reveal to the Messiah a divine name, previously unknown, just as

He did in the past, to Moses in the case of the famous *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh* ("I Am That I Am"), which Abulafia describes as surfacing in contexts related to redemption.¹⁴⁰ Abulafia does not disclose the precise nature of this name, and hints at the formula *'AHWY*. Against this background we may better understand the significance of the word *shemi*, "my name," which is part of the redefinition of the "knowledge of the Messiah and the wisdom of the Redeemer": The divine Name, whatever its precise new formulation may be, is to be seen as part of the messianic gnosis. Though dealing either with a ritual of the past, the high priest's pronunciation of the Name in the Temple, or a future ritual—the same as that performed by the Messiah—Abulafia means something much more actual. On the same page where he describes the Messiah as a high priest he also divulges the technical details concerning the pronunciation of the divine names.¹⁴¹ In several instances, he characterizes his own Kabbalah as having the status of the Kohen in relation to sefirotic Kabbalah, described by him as corresponding to the lower category of Levi.¹⁴² Therefore, Abulafia not only assumes that he is in the possession of the unknown divine name, formally the prerogative of the Messiah, but he also claims to possess the precise way of reciting divine names.

Moreover, in the same book where he offers the technique for pronouncing the divine name, he claims that the mystical experience induced by it is messianic, and he describes the feeling of anointment that accompanies it. On the basis of this antecedent, it seems that Sabbatai Tzevi's declaration, dated around 1648, that "I am the Messiah" in the context of the pronunciation of the divine name¹⁴³ should be better understood as following a pattern formulated in the writings of Abraham Abulafia. We have approached the question of the sacerdotal nature of the Messiah in Abulafia, from a specific angle, important historically because of the plausible reverberations in Sabbatai Tzevi.

However, there are additional reasons for identifying the Messiah with the high priest. In a twelfth-century Byzantine Jewish source, *Midrash Leqah Tov* by R. Tuviah ben Eliezer, the Messiah ben Joseph is described as building the temple and offering sacrifices, a function that is characteristic of the priests.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Metatron was connected in some apocalyptic sources, as well as in Abulafia's writings, with the Messiah and has been described in a rabbinic source and in the Hebrew Book of Enoch as a high priest in the supernal Temple; thus a possible identification between the three is possible.¹⁴⁵ The sacerdotal aspect of the Messiah is in fact his functioning as an ecstatic Kabbalist who attempts to reach a mystical experience. Unlike the other Kabbalists, who related the messianic experiences of the Messiah to the nomian way of behavior, Abulafia was resorting to an anomian one, namely the pronunciation of the divine name as a mystical technique. One should not, in my view, understand this Kabbalist's resort to the image of the high priest as an attempt to associate himself with the

more popular form of apocalyptic messianism, which was indeed very much concerned with the rebuilding of the Temple by the Messiah. For Abulafia, the high priest was none other than an ecstatic Kabbalist, and a Kabbalist may become a high priest, as we learn from the end of one of his epistles: "Whoever wants to come to the Temple and enter the Holy of Holies should hallow himself with the holiness of the high priest, study and teach, keep and perform [the commandments?] until he becomes perfect in his moral and intellectual capacities, and then he may isolate himself¹⁴⁶ in order to receive the prophetic influx from the 'mouth of the Almighty.'"¹⁴⁷ *Beit ha-miqdash* and even the Holy of Holies are not conceived in the biblical and rabbinic traditions as being accessible to "whoever wants," a phrase that betrays a tendency to popularize one of the most exclusive places in the history of religion, which was done by means of its allegorization. Just as the high priest is the ecstatic Kabbalist, so is his experience identical to ecstasy, for which he must prepare himself carefully. Abulafia reinterpreted the nature of the high priest, and of the Temple, in order to open the gate for a more comprehensive mystical experience which he identified as messianic and redemptive.¹⁴⁸

Abulafia's Life as Messianic Timetable

Messianism can be understood as part of someone's attempt to make sense of his life. This is certainly true in the case of Abulafia. In fact, we may use his biographical time frame to better understand his messianic activities. Abulafia was born in 1240 C.E., which corresponds to the Jewish year 5000. Abulafia himself describes that millennial year as the time of the beginning of prophecy. In 1260, apparently owing to the influence of the Mongolian invasion of Syria and the land of Israel, he departed on a journey to Israel in search of the Sambation River. In 1270 he received his first revelation in Barcelona. In 1280 he tried to arrange an audience with the pope, and his expected date of the final redemption was 1290. In fact, every complete decade can be seen as a time of special potential, and it seems that the rhythm of the round decade encouraged the messianic expression in Abulafia.

This emphasis on round decades may, after all, be meaningless. Are there additional facts which foster the messianic view of Abulafia's activity? As already mentioned, one of the signs of the Messiah according to Nahmanides', and according to Abulafia's own revelation, is the journey to the pope, which recalls Moses' going before Pharaoh. This is a paradigmatic event which we will return to when dealing with Shlomo Molkho and Nathan of Gaza.

Abulafia's journey to Rome in 1280 is the first recorded sojourn of a Messiah with the explicit intention to meet the pope. It seems that Abulafia was trying to

fulfill the divine revelation that he had received a decade previously in Barcelona. In order to get to Rome in time, Abulafia left Greece late in 1278 or early in 1279, and arrived in Capua in 1279, where he attempted to gather a small group of students. In the summer of 1280 he arrived in Rome and attempted to meet the pope. The pope, for his part, was unwilling to speak to him, and left Rome to relax in a small castle in Soriano de Cimini. In his commentary on *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Abulafia testifies that he then received a message from the pope, that if he dared come to meet him in Soriano he would immediately be burned at the stake. In spite of this warning Abulafia nevertheless decided to go to Soriano de Cimini, north of Rome and arrived there, as he indicates, on the eve of the Jewish New Year 5041. As soon as he arrived there he was informed that the pope was dead. This episode sounds like a folktale, but the chronicles of the Vatican, as well as the extant historical documents concerning the death of Pope Nicholas III, support Abulafia's account. In all the Latin texts the word used to describe Nicholas's death is *subito*, which confirms Abulafia's description of it in Hebrew, *peta'*. In fact, the Christian chroniclers report that the pope died without confession, for his attendants did not have time to arrange for a priest to come to him. Abulafia was then, according to his own testimony, arrested, not to be burned at the stake but to be held in custody in Rome by a small sect of Franciscan monks known as the Minorites; he was set free two weeks later, apparently without explanation. He then left the Italian peninsula for Sicily, where he spent the last decade of his life, from 1280 to 1291.

The question remains, What did Abulafia want from the pope? or To what purpose did he seek this audience? To our great dismay, all that remains of any statement of Abulafia's intentions is a single sentence, which reads that he intended to speak with the pope about "Judaism in general." There are two opinions concerning the meaning of this sentence. One holds that Abulafia returned to the words of Nahmanides, who stipulates that the Messiah journey to the pope to request his people's release from bondage, and sees this as simply a political plea: like Moses in the front of Pharaoh, the demand would be, "Let my people go." This explanation is also held, *mutatis mutandis*, by some historians, most eminently Gershom Scholem.¹⁴⁹ The other opinion, embraced by M. Landauer, A. Jellinek, H. Graetz, and others, holds that Abulafia was hoping to convert the pope to Judaism.¹⁵⁰ This extraordinary view is also found in different accounts of Abulafia's life. Yet it seems that neither of these interpretations fit Abulafia's own words. An important clue to understanding the purpose of Abulafia's attempt to win a papal audience is found in the correct interpretation of the term *yahadut*, "Judaism," to which throughout his works Abulafia gives special meaning. Abulafia derives the word from the name Yehudah, which is in

turn from the Hebrew root for confession, *hodah*. Therefore a Jew is someone who admits to a specific issue, namely, he is dedicated to the divine names. Indeed, a real Jew is an ecstatic Kabbalist. As we have seen in the passage from *Sefer ha-'Edut*, even the Messiah is understood as a corporeal name, and he is anointed by the powers of the divine names. In Abulafia's system the special or specific issue that one admits to is, quite expectably, the power of the divine names, which stands at the center of the Kabbalistic thought that he developed. If this is indeed the original interpretation of *yahadut*,¹⁵¹ then perhaps his abortive attempt at gaining an audience with the pope should be viewed as his attempt to converse with him about the "authentic" essence of Judaism. This does not mean that Abulafia felt it necessary to convert the pope to Judaism, as some scholars have claimed, but rather to aid him in understanding Abulafia's special status as a representative of this pure Judaism, or the Kabbalah which focuses on the use of the sacred names of God, as the means to attain prophecy and messianism.

This single dangerous attempt of Abulafia to go before the pope did not deter him from further messianic preoccupations. He interpreted the death of the pope in two ways. On the one hand Abulafia emphasized his own readiness to give his life for the love of God's commandment. In other words, he proclaimed his adherence to the challenge at all cost. On the other hand, Abulafia understood the death of the pope as a divine intervention or even as a testimony to his mission, for he writes of the event as a sign of God's having saved him from the hand of his enemy. Even after his release from the custody of the Minorites, he did not halt his messianic activities: he tried to proclaim his Kabbalistic message to Jews and Christians alike, an absolutely exceptional event in the Middle Ages. During the thirteenth century it was not customary behavior on the part of Kabbalists to spread their teachings among Jews, no less among Christians.¹⁵² Abulafia, however, out of a feeling of messianic urgency, viewed himself as called to both a propaganda mission and an attempt to disclose Kabbalah in more exoteric terms. In a poem composed in the same year as his journey to Rome, he wrote: "You should vivify the multitude by the means of the name Yah, and be as a lion who skips in every city and open place."¹⁵³

As we shall see in the next chapter, Abulafia explicitly connects the divine name Yah to the Messiah.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the attempt to speak with the pope is not solely an attempt to disseminate Kabbalah but is also an act that has redemptive overtones. Actually, Abulafia persisted in engaging in messianic activities in Sicily, where he founded a small school of Kabbalah.¹⁵⁵ This is not the place to discuss the influence of Abulafia's views on messianism; Aescoly has pointed out the possible resonances in *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, in the writings of Shlomo Molkho,

and even the attribution of a crucial Sabbatean vision to Abraham Abulafia.¹⁵⁶ Though I am not convinced that all Aescoly's points can be proven philologically,¹⁵⁷ his highlighting of Abulafia's importance for the development of the messianic thought is still relevant for other reasons, as I shall attempt to show later.¹⁵⁸

Altogether the profound messianic character of thirteenth-century Kabbalah betrays an extraordinary affinity between mysticism, messianism, and the biography of the messianic aspirant.¹⁵⁹ Seen from this perspective, the history of the relationship between messianism and Kabbalah must take into serious consideration the frequently repeated commonplace that messianism and Kabbalah were organically integrated only after the expulsion from Spain.¹⁶⁰ It is to be hoped that after learning about the synthesis offered by Abulafia and some of his followers, scholars who critically address these issues will entertain a more historical and less dogmatic approach to the development of the relations between messianism and Kabbalah, as well as a more adequate phenomenology of these religious phenomena.¹⁶¹

Ego, Ergo Sum Messiah: On Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Yashar*

The Return of Prophecy

At the end of 1278 or the beginning of 1279, Abraham Abulafia made his way from Patros in Greece to Capua, with a short forced stay in Trani, where he was imprisoned because he was denounced by the Jews.¹ In Capua he taught Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* to four young students. He left for Rome on his abortive attempt to meet with the pope, an episode that has already been discussed in chapter 2. Sometime early in 1279, he composed in Patros a "prophetic book" called *Sefer ha-Yashar*, the first of a long series of prophetic books, all but one now lost, and most probably the first Kabbalistic writing composed in the Byzantine empire. Because of his own commentaries, however, short passages of the original prophetic books are still extant. In chapter 2 we dealt with passages regarding the nature of the Messiah, as expressed in some of the commentaries on the lost books. Here I would like to call attention to the implications of a passage that is more complex, written in a kind of code but highly relevant for the connections between mysticism, messianism, and Abulafia's Kabbalah. The beginning of the book deals with the recent return of prophecy:

In the thirty-ninth year of the return of the word of 'Adonay YHWH to the mouth of His prophets, the angel of 'Elohim² came to me, Berakhiah ben Shalviel, and announced a word to me. I have already mentioned to you that this is the first book that Raziel wrote in the form of prophecy,³ namely that he mentioned in it [the formula] 'Thus has H [namely God] said,'⁴ which is the form of the word of divine prophecy, which requires a mighty inquiry as to its matter and way. . . . You should know that Raziel is called in this book Berakhiah ben Shalviel, in accordance with the first name, and this is because it is known that he received the blessing from the

Name, and peace and serenity . . . and you should know that Raziel called this book by the title *Sefer ha-Yashar*, whose secret is *Shem ShYRaH, YeShaRaH*.⁵

The two divine names in the first sentence of this passage, 'Adonay YHWH, occur together in Ezekiel, in order to introduce the speech of God,⁶ and they were chosen in this context deliberately. Their meaning may be better understood by comparing that statement to one found in a book written either by Abulafia or by his student, where the assumption is that the consonants which make up these divine names also constitute the words 'aHWY, and *Ha-DYN*.⁷ The ecstatic Kabbalist claims that whoever knows this secret will be the Master, who governs all mundane matters and will be called the angel of 'Elohiym. This hyperbolic description recalls the extraordinary powers of the Messiah, and indeed the Messiah is mentioned some lines before the above passage.⁸ Moreover, according to Abulafia, the letters 'aHWY are in fact the hidden divine name, which will be revealed to the Messiah.⁹ Thus, the return of prophecy is reported in a statement that implies also the revelation of the unknown divine name.¹⁰

In *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Abulafia adopted for himself theophoric names, which are numerically equivalent to his original names. For example, the gematria of the name Berakhiyah, which means, according to his own explanation, the person who has received the blessing of God, is 248, the same as Abulafia's first name, Abraham. Raziel, a more common name in his prophetic writings, is the name of an angel in ancient Jewish texts; it means "secrets of God" and amounts to 248 too. The name Shalviel means "serenity of God" and amounts to 377, as do the consonants of the name of Abulafia's father, Shmu'el. Therefore, the return of the word of God, or prophecy, means not only the reception of messages from the divine world but also a more ontological connection between the mystic and the deity, which transforms the recipient either by receiving a blessing or by receiving the secrets, so that his name should be changed,¹¹ all this in addition to the revelation of the new divine name. We may infer that the change in Abulafia's name points to revelatory experiences that happened prior to the composition of the original *Sefer ha-Yashar*. Indeed, the reception of the blessing, alluded to in the book elsewhere, is one of Abulafia's leitmotifs, and the blessing of the priests is one of the few commandments that he is eager to comment upon in several of his books. For him, blessing in general, and the priestly benediction in particular, is an allegory for the descent of the divine influx upon the prepared recipient.¹² Thus, the encounters with the divine powers induce certain changes in the mystic, apparently experiences of theosis that are expressed by the use of the theophoric names. It should also be mentioned that in the ancient sacral royalty ideology, the king's name has been given a theophoric prefix.¹³

Writing in 1279, Abulafia mentions the thirty-ninth year as the date for the

renewal of prophecy, thus pointing to 1240, the year of his own birth. It is, of course, quite difficult to imagine that Abulafia believed he was a prophet already at the moment of his birth, a possibility that was never mentioned in any of his extant writings and would contradict his concept of prophecy as involving intellectual maturity. In fact, he speaks of 1279 as the ninth year of the beginning of his prophecy.¹⁴ Moreover, his use of the term "prophets" in the plural shows that he thought there were other prophets who prophesied around the year 1240 C.E., which coincides with the Jewish year 5000, the beginning of the sixth millennium. In another statement, Abulafia claims that at the beginning of this millennium the Messiah will come, and he boasts¹⁵ of his knowledge of the divine name.¹⁶ Indeed, such an assumption is corroborated, at least in part, by a statement found in another of Abulafia's prophetic writings, where he describes himself as the last and best of the seven last prophets.¹⁷ We may conclude, therefore, that the return of prophecy was envisioned by Abulafia as a historical phenomenon that is also connected to other figures, who presumably preceded him, though they apparently lived in his lifetime. This seems to be the significance of a passage in his commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, composed in 1280 in Capua.¹⁸ I have not come across a list of seven, or six, prophets believed to be active between 1240 and 1279, nor have I found indications as to their possible background. However, Abulafia described at least one of his contemporaries as a "prophet." In an autobiographical passage in *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, he mentions a certain R. Shmuel the prophet, unknown from other sources, as one of the few who received some forms of mystical traditions from him, in Castile, in the town of Medinat Celim, in the early 1270s.¹⁹ A list of seven students described as close to him, which appears in the works Abulafia composed later on in Sicily, may point to a conscious effort to educate seven disciples to become prophets:

Indeed, in this town that I am within now, called Senim,²⁰ which [actually is] Messina, I have found six persons, and with me I brought the seventh, from whom they [the six] have learned in my presence, for a very short while. Each of them has received something from me, more or less, and all of them have left me, except the one, who is the first and [he is also] the first reason for what each and every one of his friends had learned from my mouth. His name is R. Sa'adiah ben R. Yitzhaq Sigilmasi, blessed be his memory. He was followed by R. Abraham ben R. Shalom, and was followed [in turn] by Rabbi Ya'aqov his son, and later was followed by R. Yitzhaq his friend, and he was followed by the friend of his friend . . . and the name of the seventh was R. Natronay Tzarfati, blessed be his memory.²¹

Was Abulafia intending to create prophets by his intense literary and teaching activities in Messina during the 1280s? In any case, it may be worth mentioning

that Enoch, treated in many texts as a prophet, was the seventh person counting from Adam, and his translation on high in the form of Metatron brought him closer to a messianic role, as we saw in chapter 2.

"The Knowledge of the Messiah and the Wisdom of the Redeemer"

Abulafia admits that he was less interested in discussing the issue of prophecy in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, since he planned to return to it in *Sefer ha-Haftarah*.²² He hints his main topic, a great secret that has to do with the Tetragrammaton and the first six letters of the so-called name of forty-two letters, YHWH 'aBG YTTz, which are numerically equal to several phrases, all of them amounting to 532, one of them being Shem YHWH 'Elyon, which means "the Tetragrammaton is supernal." Then he writes: "Because of it, Raziel has sealed his book by four words, whose initials are YHWH, and whose final letters are TeHiLaT,²³ and their secret is 'The Knowledge of the Messiah and the Wisdom of the Redeemer.'²⁴ The four Hebrew words translated by the last line indeed start with the consonants of the Tetragrammaton and end with the term *tehilat*, and each consists of five consonants. Therefore, it is quite certain that the secret of the book is to be found in the four Hebrew words *yediy'at ha-mashiyah ve-hokhmat ha-go'el*. But Abulafia goes beyond decoding the initials and final letters of the four mysterious words. After alluding to the first and last letters, he points to the meaning of the middle letters of each of the four words. Thus, the first word, *yediy'at*, yields the noun '*ediy*', "my witness," which in Abulafia's writings sometimes means the celestial witness, referring to Enoch and, according to other sources, ShaHadiY, which is numerically identical to Metatron.²⁵ The second word, *ha-mashiyah*, produces the combination of letters *shemy*, which means "my name." The middle consonants of the third word, *ve-hokhmat*, make *hakham*, which means "wise." The fourth word, however, *ha-go'el*, does not produce any word that has a significance in Hebrew. The three letters that remain after removing the first and last consonants are, according to the sequence in the word, *gimel*, *waw*, *'aleph*. However, Abulafia changes the order of the three letters and writes *'alef*, *gimel*, *waw*, though this sequel also has no meaning in Hebrew. Thus, Abulafia offers the following sequence of six words generated by the four secret words: *TeHiLaT*, *YHWH*, *'EDiY*, *ShMiY*, *HaKhaM*, *'GW*. The three "meaningless" letters have been placed by Abulafia, quite arbitrarily, at the middle of the six words and remain indecipherable in Hebrew. Resort to two other languages, however, may render them coherent, for these three consonants transliterate the Greek and Latin word *ego*. Such a reading is by no means exceptional in Abulafia, as he used both Greek and Latin words in his writings, including complex instances of gematria.²⁶ Moreover, it fits the occurrence of the first-person pos-

sessive in two words that follow *ego*, namely *shemiy* and *'ediy*, as well as the emphasis on the theophoric nature of the names Abulafia invented for himself in order to point to his mystical attainment. The egocentric discussion that precedes the above passage reinforces the importance of decoding the three letters in the manner I have suggested.

Let me return to the way I have translated the four nouns. Grammatically speaking, they constitute two phrases, each constructed of two nouns. The first phrase, *yediy'at ha-mashiyah*, is quite ambiguous; I could not find any parallel to it in Hebrew, and there is more than one way to render its meaning. It could mean "knowledge of the Messiah," namely knowledge that is in the possession of the Messiah or information known by the Messiah. An alternative translation, which I have tentatively adopted above, would be "knowledge about the Messiah," and thus the intention would be that other persons have special knowledge about the Messiah. This is also the case insofar the second phrase, *hokhmat ha-go'el*, is concerned. I have never encountered this expression in a Hebrew text. One possible translation, corresponding to the first one proposed above in connection to the first phrase, would "wisdom of the redeemer," meaning that the redeemer possesses a certain type of wisdom. An alternative translation would be "wisdom regarding the redeemer." There can be no doubt that the two unusual phrases are the result of Abulafia's intention to construe four nouns that can be reconstructed so as to produce the six other words, an exercise which is in itself a tour de force. But which meaning would Abulafia would prefer? The passage that immediately follows the above lines may help us answer that question:

This wisdom [*hokhmah*, the knowledge of reality] alone is the best instrument for [achieving] prophecy,²⁷ better than all the other [forms of] wisdom. And the essence of reality, when known by someone from what he learned from books dealing with it, should be called wise [*hakham*]. But when he will know it by means of a tradition, transmitted to him by someone who knew it by means of the [divine] names, or [received it] from a Kabbalist, he should be called someone who understands [*mevin*]. But whoever will know it from [introspection into] his heart, by means of a negotiation in his mind²⁸ concerning what was available to him about mental reality [*ha-metziyut ha-nehshav*], will be called knower [*da'atan*]. However, whoever will know reality by means of the three manners that gathered into his heart, namely wisdom [emerging] out of much learning, and understanding received from the mouth of true Kabbalists, and knowledge [emerging] out of much negotiation in [his] thought, I do not say that this person is called only a prophet, but as long as he was active, and he was not affected by the Separate Intellect, or he was affected but did not know by whom he was affected.²⁹ However, if he was affected, and he was aware that he was affected, it is incumbent upon me and upon any perfect person that he is called a teacher [*moreh*] "because his name is like the name of his Master,"³⁰ be it only by one, or by many, or by all of His names. For now he is no

longer separated from his Master, and behold he is his Master, and his Master is he; for he is so intimately adhering to Him³¹ that he cannot, by any means, be separated from Him, for he is He. And just as his Master, who is detached from all matter, is called the knowledge, the knower, and the known, all at the same time, since all three are one in Him, so shall he, the exalted man, the master of the exalted name, be called intellect, while he is actually knowing; then he is also the known, like his Master; and then there is no difference between them, except that his Master has His supreme rank by His own right and not derived from other creatures, while he is elevated to his rank by the mediation of creatures.³²

Abulafia mentions three ways of knowing reality as preparatory stages for the even higher form of cognition, that of the prophet. One has to be wise, understanding, and knowledgeable, namely to comprehend reality by all possible ways starting with the mundane realm, before he is able to move to a higher way of receiving information from above. Only their combination will bring someone to receive the direct information that is not mediated by human teachers or books or by inner pondering. When one becomes aware that the Agent Intellect is illuminating him, he reaches the rank of teacher. The relation between prophet and teacher is less than clear. One tentative proposal is that the prophet is lower than the teacher, the former being influenced by the Separate Intellect but unaware of the nature of the sources,³³ while the teacher definitively is aware of it. But according to another Abulafian source, whose other affinities to views expressed in *Sefer ha-Yashar* have been pointed out above, we may assume that the Messiah is indeed aware of the divine source of his revelation: "The Messiah confesses that his speech and conversation comes from the special name that is with him by nature, and it generates the speech, and actualizes it after it has been in potentia. And the simpletons do not feel from where their speech comes, and they are like an animal that produces a sound which is similar to speech, but does not understand the nature which is inherent in it."³⁴

The teacher [*moreh*] and the redeemer possess some sort of wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, as Abulafia mentions elsewhere, the Messiah is a higher form of prophet, but a prophet nevertheless.³⁵ Thus, we may assume that the teacher, though higher than the prophet, nonetheless corresponds to the Messiah. Such a reading is corroborated by the emphasis on the complete cleaving of the human teacher to his spiritual supernal master or teacher, *rabbo*, which means the cleaving to the Agent Intellect.³⁶ As we have seen in chapter 2, however, the Agent Intellect was described in another prophetic writing as one of the meanings of the term *mashiyah*, so that cleaving to it is tantamount to cleaving to the ontological and ever-present supernal Messiah and thus becoming united with it. Therefore, the teacher and the Messiah, even if they are not an identical entity, are still close enough to each other,³⁷ while the concept of

moreh tzedeq in this literature has been connected to a prophetic and, according to some scholars, messianic figure.³⁸ The messianic nature of the teacher is also evident from another point of view: the teacher is described as attaining the mystical union which entitles him to possess the same name like that of his master. One of the major sources for such a view is found in *BT, Sanhedrin*, fol. 38a. Though a rare formula is rabbinic texts, the identity of the name of Metatron to that of his master appears in another relevant source. In one of the most important treatises of apocalyptic messianism, *Sefer Zerubbavel*, Metatron reveals himself in Rome to a messianic figure named Zerubbavel, and as part of their conversation Metatron describes himself thus: "I am he whose name is like the name of my Master, and His name is in me."³⁹ The discussion that follows this statement deals with the nature of the Messiah and the apocalyptic scheme. Thus, Abulafia's resort to this formula in the context of the teacher invites, for someone well acquainted with the apocalyptic literature, a messianic understanding of the nature of the teacher. Indeed, as I mentioned in the Introduction, the Messiah will be called by the name of God, more precisely the Tetragrammaton, an issue that suggests a deep affinity between the two entities. Just as in the way Abulafia uses the formula related to Metatron and God in order to point out the teacher's or the Messiah's identity with Metatron, so too the much earlier designation of the name of the Messiah as Tetragrammaton presupposes the preexistence, or the emergence, of a continuum between the perfected individual and the higher spiritual entities. In the text discussed above, the nominal identity is between the teacher and Metatron. But since elsewhere in his writings, in *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, a book composed in the same period as *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Abulafia describes the angel Metatron as someone whose name is identical with the divine name and thus with God's name, we may speak about the emergence of a linguistic continuum between God, Metatron, and the perfected human being that becomes the redeemer.

The Teacher and the Messiah

Abulafia's biography may illuminate the quality of the teacher. In a short autobiographical note, Abulafia mentions that he studied Kabbalah from both written and oral traditions, and I assume that he understood these forms of knowledge as pointing to the nature of reality. Soon afterward, however, he started to teach Kabbalah in Spain, Greece, and Italy. When writing the above passage on the teacher, he was teaching Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* to four students in the town of Capua near Rome and expressed his will to perfect his students, in the way he was perfected by his teachers: "I have also felt a very great joy, greater than that felt by my teachers when they taught me, and I have

also looked to actualize the potential of the others, so that they will be perfected by my words and books."⁴⁰ Therefore, he saw himself not only a student of this lore but also as an intensive teacher. Abulafia conceived of himself as an actualizer who enables the intellect of the other to emerge, and by so doing he plays the role of the Agent Intellect or, according to his view, the Messiah as Agent Intellect. The nature of this intellect is its unrestrained and continuous emanation, and I assume that Abulafia saw this matter as messianic and attempted to imitate it. In fact, there is no other evidence for such an intense campaign to disseminate this lore beforehand, and there are only very rare examples afterward. From this point of view, Abulafia had good reason to see himself as a teacher at the very time when he resorted to the term *moreh* in order to describe the highest spiritual attainment. Since 1279–1280 was also the period when he attempted to meet the pope, we may assume that Abulafia could consider himself to be the teacher, a view that is connected with his messianism, namely the concept that disseminating his particular form of lore will open the gate to a general redemption of those who follow his teachings. Moreover, one of the conditions of becoming a teacher, being aware of the nature of the entity that reveals itself to him, is met in explicit terms by the very beginning of *Sefer ha-Yashar*, where he mentions his speaking in the name of God. And as mentioned in his *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, the Messiah, together with other prophets, will reveal the secrets of the Torah as part of the advent of the messianic days.⁴¹

If he conceived of himself as the teacher, someone who had an experience of union with God, and as possessing more qualities than mentioned in the context of the Messiah (knowledge and wisdom), is a teacher higher than the Messiah? In my opinion the answer is yes. The Messiah may stand, according to Abulafia, for the redeemed person, or more exactly his intellect, even if he does not act on the public arena.⁴² However, the teacher, like the more advanced Messiah who plays a public role, is described as having additional qualities: recognition by men—after he was already recognized by God as a prophet—and the reception of power or strength, as the former redeemers had.⁴³ The teacher may, therefore, represent the peak of cognitive and mystical achievements when combined with external acts. I have proposed a reading of the phrases *yedi'at ha-mashiyah ve-hokhmat ha-go'el* as dealing with the forms of cognition attributed to the redeemer. However, this interpretation is not self-evident from the grammatical structure of the phrases, though the above analysis corroborates it. I would like to suggest the possibility of an additional interpretation which was not expressed in my translation of the four words. The Hebrew phrases are, presumably, approximations of the Greek terms *soteriologia* and *christologia*, which stand for forms of theological discussion dealing with the nature of the redeemer.⁴⁴ Such a proposal corroborates the reading of the three Hebrew letters as a Greek or Latin word, *ego*.

R. Yitzhaq of Acre on Messiah as Metatron

In *Sefer 'Otzar Hayyim* by R. Yitzhaq of Acre, a Kabbalist discussed in chapter 3,⁴⁵ one cannot escape the feeling that a strong Metatronic tradition or traditions had inspired his concepts and experiences, since R. Yitzhaq is often visited by Metatron. In fact, some of the most interesting accounts of his mystical experiences are explicitly related to that angel. In my opinion, the influence of some of the ideas discussed above may be discerned in the following passage:

And indeed, MoSheH⁴⁶ "is a wheel in heaven"⁴⁷ and the secret of Sand[alfon]⁴⁸ is "[a wheel] upon the earth" [Ezekiel 1:15], namely, in the [realm of] corporeality. And this is the reason why the double [final] letters, which are written only at the end of words, § whose secret is PaR ["ox"],⁴⁹ are its secret, because it is the secret of the Prince of the Back, [which is] the Prince of the Wood.⁵⁰ The secret of Sand[alfon] is Par and Ya'ar. But the secret of MoSheH is "in heaven" namely, in spirituality,⁵¹ "and the spirit will dwell upon them" [Num. 11:26], "and the Lord will put His spirit upon them" [Num. 11:29], "but by my spirit" [Haggai 2:5], "and the spirit of God hovers over the water" [Gen. 1:2] - this is the spirit of the Messiah" [Genesis Rabba 2:4], and it is MoSheH the High Priest, anointed by the oil, the supernal holy unction, the true Messiah, who will come today, if we listen to the voice of his Master,⁵² whose name is found in him,⁵³ he will redeem us. And "In all our affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of the face saved us,"⁵⁴ my intention concerns the verse "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of His face saved them" [Isa. 63:9]⁵⁵ and "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" [Isa. 11:2], those and all similar to them hint at Metatron, the Prince of the Face.⁵⁶

Here the term *mashiyah* is mentioned explicitly as identical to the angel Metatron. Moreover, the quotation from Isaiah 11:2 was traditionally understood as pointing to the Messiah. What is the significance of both Metatron and *mashiyah* in this passage? Both are identical to the spiritual realm, as against Sandalfon, which in R. Barukh Togarmi, Abulafia's master, in Abulafia himself, in the collectanaea of a certain R. Nathan, the teacher of R. Yitzhaq of Acre, and in the anonymous *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq* is identical to corporeality and materiality, hinted at sometimes by the same terms used in the above passage: Ya'ar and Par.⁵⁷ The master mentioned here is apparently God, whose name is found within Metatron or the Messiah. By listening to His voice, the Kabbalists will be saved by the supernal Messiah. This listening means overcoming the corporeality for the sake of spirituality, or judgment for the sake of mercy, a theme that occurs often in R. Yitzhaq.⁵⁸ By mastering corporeality, which is an individual project, one may attain redemption from the ongoing active Messiah qua Metatron.

The picture, however, is more complex and interesting. Immediately after this passage, the author again mentions Sandalfon as an ox, and "the Prince of

the Back, the Prince of judgment, but the sheep, which is the innocent lamb [*Seh tamim*] is—in its entirety—good, and it is MoSheH, the Prince of Mercy.⁵⁹ The juxtaposition of the ox and the lamb, the latter standing for Metatron and Messiah, is reminiscent of the well-known motif of Jesus Christ as the lamb of God, *agnus Dei*.⁶⁰ Unlike Abulafia, who identified Jesus with matter and the Messiah ben David with the spirit, here the spiritual Messiah is described by using one of the most widespread Christian symbols.

Before presenting another example of the interface between messianic ideas and alien forms of thought, let me emphasize that R. Yitzhaq, like Abulafia and other anonymous Kabbalists from his circle, does not simply recommend obedience to the divine imperatives but presupposes the need to resort to mystical techniques for achieving a mystical experience.⁶¹ In any case, the many experiences of the angel Metatron, identified with the Messiah, allow a reading of some of his mystical experiences as redemptive.

To what extent the fact that the consonants of lamb, *SeH*, similar to the last two consonants of the acronym *MoSheH*, also contributed to the emergence of the above discussion is a difficult question. There are instances when R. Yitzhaq uses the formula *Metatron SeH* instead of *Metatron SaR Ha-Panim*. This Kabbalist, like Abulafia, was very fond of playing with letters. Yet despite this observation, the identification of the lamb with a messianic figure, who is described as suffering or at least participating in the suffering of men, and the mention of mercy point to a Christian influence.

The resort to Christian symbolism in order to better understand R. Yitzhaq's discussion may be fostered by another passage found in *Sefer 'Otzar Hayyim*. When dealing with a Hebrew version of the myth of Prometheus, R. Yitzhaq indicates that he received the legend, already transferred to the figure of Solomon, from a Christian.⁶² Despite the fact that he was aware of the alien extraction of the material, he offers Kabbalistic interpretations of its meaning:

However, according to the way of the hidden [interpretation]⁶³ Solomon hints at MoSheH⁶⁴ in relation to whom it is written, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted" [Isa. 63:9] and "I will be with him in distress" [Psalms 91:15]. And in accordance with the way of truth⁶⁵ Solomon is hinting at [the sefirah of] Ti[feret]⁶⁶ and to [the sefirah of] 'A[tarah],⁶⁷ and the ravens mean, following the way of the sages of the Kabbalists of Sefarad,⁶⁸ the external ranks, which ascend and harass the divine powers. But in the days of the Messiah, may he come soon in our days, the external ranks will be lowered and return to the abyss of the earth, which is the place of their emanation, which is also identical to their annihilation [*'afisatan*],⁶⁹ and [then] the influxes of [the sefirah of] Pa[had] will disappear, and efflux of [the sefirah of] ha-Ge[dulah] and Pahad will come into the Ti[feret] and 'A[tarah].⁷⁰

R. Yitzḥaq was much more eclectic than Abulafia and some of the other early Kabbalists, and he brought together in his writings different Kabbalistic systems of thought and symbols. In the above passage, a more Abulafian theme is represented by the first quotation in this paragraph, given the occurrence of Metatron, which parallels some of the features of this angel that we have already encountered. Given that Solomon, as presented in the legend, substituted Prometheus as sufferer, we have an excellent illustration of the *via passionis* in a manner reminiscent of the Christian savior. The second part of the passage, however, represents an example of symbolic interpretation in the vein of the Castilian Kabbalah. Prometheus' ravens become demonic powers, which harass the divine ones, a process that will cease only with the coming of the Messiah. Now it is the divine power that is suffering, not the angelic Metatron, a turn that brings the passage closer to the Greek discussion of the semidivine titan and to the Christian Christ. Despite the identification of Metatron with the Messiah, and its explicit spiritual nature, the *passio* is still quite distinct. Indeed, the participation of Metatron in the suffering of the lower human beings is quite exceptional, especially when it is compared to Abulafian views of the Agent Intellect, even when identified with the last sefirah, Malkhut. The founder of ecstatic Kabbalah emphasizes the *via perfectionis*, and I would like to compare his more philosophically oriented view to that of R. Yitzḥaq. Abulafia describes the last sefirah as one whose effects are all eternal, *kol 'aluleyah nitzḥiyim*, and are included in its category because they are the individuals generated by a certain cause, designated as the "form of the intellect."⁷¹ Eternity, union, and immortality are ensured by the intellectual nature of the Agent Intellect, namely the participation of the lower in the nature of the higher entity, while in the case of the more mythical Kabbalist, it is the participation of the higher in the suffering of the lower entities. The Metatronic nature of this Kabbalist's view of the Messiah, which is certainly not the single occurrence in his writings, nevertheless reflects the ontic-noetic understanding of ecstatic Kabbalah, which is integrated within the *via passionis*, influenced by theosophical Kabbalistic forms of thought, both Greek and Christian. This is but one more example for the complexities inherent in unfolding the constellation of messianic ideas.

By offering a variety of explanations of messianic concepts, R. Yitzḥaq shows that this was a significant issue, to be reflected by means of all the mystical systems at his disposition and to be integrated, experientially and not only conceptually, in his religious life. This does not mean that he had to become externally active as a Messiah, as Abulafia did, but it would be simplistic to exclude his interpretations of messianism from the descriptions of the "messianic idea," as indeed happened in the conventional scholarship. This Kabbalist, like

R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, is a fine illustration of the fascination of Jewish mystics with messianic ideas, which are interpreted time and again in the light of their diverse mystical concerns, producing divergent conceptualization of the meaning of the Messiah. These concepts of the Messiah represent not a mere inconsistency but the result of encounters with different types of Kabbalah, of a quest for new forms of knowledge, which together contributed to the multidimensional picture of messianic ideas in the writings of one Kabbalist. Abulafia contributed one aspect in R. Yitzhaq's variegated interpretations of the nature of the Messiah.

Sefer ha-Yashar: A New Torah?

Referring to the title of his first prophetic book, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Abulafia points out that the numerical value of *Ha-YaShaR* equals that of *ShYRaH*, "song," and *TeFiLLaH*, "prayer." Nonetheless, I could not detect anything poetical or liturgical in the sentences stemming from the book or in its commentary. Though he indeed used the poetic format in his single extant prophetic book, *Sefer ha-'Ot*, I see no reason to restrict the meaning of the title to this possible explanation. The first book's title is reminiscent of the lost *Sefer ha-Yashar* mentioned in the Bible.⁷² This lost book was described in one of the apocalyptic discussions in Midrash as the book that God will reveal to the Messiah at the beginning of his apocalyptic deeds. It is described as so large that the entire Torah is but one line of it.⁷³ Is it possible to establish a connection between the two? As Abulafia indicated several times, each of his six prophetic books is to be considered as sealed by *Sefer ha-Hafiarah*, another prophetic book of his, which he considered worthy to be read in synagogue after the reading of the Torah.⁷⁴ But while *Sefer ha-Hafiarah* is the last of the first cycle of prophetic books, *Sefer ha-Yashar* is the first. Is the teacher, who has attained the union with God, the possible composer of an authoritative book that competes with the Torah? This idea may seem rather audacious, but it is less so if we remember that Abulafia took himself to be higher even than Moses⁷⁵ and called one of his other prophetic books in the same cycle *Sefer Berit Hadashah*, "Book of the New Covenant." Elsewhere in his prophetic books he asserts that a "new religion," *dat hadashah*, has been revealed, which is a religiosity based on the knowledge of the divine name.⁷⁶

More straightforwardly he wrote in *Sefer ha-Hafiarah*, in the name of God: "I innovate a new Torah within the holy nation, which is my people Israel. My honorable name is like a new Torah, and it has not been explicated to my people since the day I hid my face from them."⁷⁷ Did not the beginning of *Sefer ha-Yashar* also mention the return of the word of God? Is Abulafia, who built up

many of his books on the divine name, as he explicitly indicates,⁷⁸ and proclaimed the importance of the study of the divine name,⁷⁹ not suggesting an attempt to reveal the new Torah? Is the loss of the original version of Abulafia's prophetic books a matter of accident, while almost all of his other books are extant in many manuscripts? It seems that Abulafia has come closer than any of the Jewish Messiahs to the concept of being the revealer of a new law, a more spiritual one, which is indeed a profound reform of religion able to take man to more radical religious experiences culminating in extreme mystical experiences conceived of as redemptive. His Kabbalah is therefore not only the exposure and disclosure of the esoteric sense of sacred Scripture but also, in his view, their radical fulfillment. The great wisdom of the redeemer, Abulafia claims, is to cause all three religions to "know the supreme name."⁸⁰ As we have seen in chapter 2, the nexus between the messianic experience and the recitation of the divine name was part and parcel of Abulafia's system and praxis. Hence the divine name is a basic ingredient of Abulafia's mystical technique, the goal of the more sublime mystical gnosis, and the name the Messiah is to call himself and by which he is to be called. The possession of such a powerful means and the belief that he may use it, as well as the resort to the term *ego*, which points to an awareness of a high personal attainment, illumine Abulafia's choice of a via perfectionis as the single manner of acting as a redeemer.

These discussions, together with the treatments of Abulafian thought in chapter 2, contribute to another picture of Jewish messianism in the Middle Ages and its reverberations in Christian Kabbalah, Sabbateanism, and Hasidism. They also, however, establish another perspective for understanding the transmission of ancient angelological traditions in the Middle Ages and their transformation in lived experiences, some of them fraught with salvific and messianic overtones. If in my earlier writings I sometimes emphasized the plausibility of continuity between some theosophical-theurgical traditions in antiquity and the Middle Age Kabbalah,⁸¹ in this book I have attempted to put in relief the possible contributions of elements preserved in Abulafia toward another understanding of the history of Kabbalah.⁸²

I. Twersky, ed., *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983), pp. 113-116, 123, 128.

70. Pines, *Between Jewish Thought*, pp. 277-305.

71. There is a vast scholarly literature on Joachim's thought; see e.g. the various writings of Marjorie Reeves, especially her *Influence of Prophecy*, as well as B. McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot* (Macmillan, New York, 1985), and Emmerson and Herzman, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 1-35; Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought*, pp. 56-58.

72. On this difficult treatise see the analysis of Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 460-474; on Joachim's views, see pp. 464-465.

73. Gerona: *ibid.*, pp. 460-461n233; Provence: *ibid.*, pp. 461, 468.

74. I hope to devote a special study to this issue; see, for the time being, Moshe Idel, "The Meaning of 'Ta'amim ha-'Ofot Ha-Teme'im' of R. David ben Yehuda ha-Hasid," in M. Hallamish, ed., *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran* (Bar-Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 1990), pp. 18-21 (Hebrew).

75. Yitzhak Baer, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People* (Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem, 1985), 2:306-349 (Hebrew).

76. See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3:1438-1439.

77. Reeves, *Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 175-290.

78. This statement, which may be qualified by further studies, does not imply that in other phases of Jewish Kabbalistic messianism Christian elements were not influential. See below, chap. 4; chap. 7, n. 102, and app. 1.

79. Compare the different stand of Scholem on this issue: *'Od Davar*, p. 240.

80. See the philosophical identity of most of the authors dealt with by Schwartz, "Neutralization of the Messianic Idea."

81. Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, pp. 9-15.

82. Moshe Idel, "Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism," in S. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Language* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1992), pp. 42-79; idem, "A la recherche de la langue originelle: Le témoignage du nourrisson," *Revue d'histoires des religions* 213-214 (1996), pp. 417-420.

Chapter 2: Abraham Abulafia: Ecstatic Kabbalah and Spiritual Messianism

1. Most of the details of Abulafia's biography are from Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrasch*, 3:xli-xlii. See also his *Auswahl kabbalistischer Mystik*, erstes Heft (Leipzig, 1853), German part, pp. 16-18. For mentioning of great wars in the vicinity of Acre in an eschatological context see the early medieval *Prayer of R. Shime'on bar Yohai*, in Even Shmuel, ed., *Midreshei Ge'ullah*, p. 278.

2. This journey to the Sambation River as an event fraught with eschatological expectations recalls the hopes of a later messianic figure, Sabbatai Tzevi. His prophet, Nathan of Gaza, foretold the visit of this Messiah to the legendary river, whence he was supposed to return with his new bride. See Nathan's text preserved in *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 9. The scholarly attribution to Abulafia of the claim that he had already gone to the Sambation is a misrepresentation; Abulafia indeed broadcast his intention to go there, but he never claimed to have attained this goal. See, however, Friedlaender, "Shiitic Influences," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, p. 156n172. On the utopia of Sambation see Shlomo Yaniv, "'The Utopian Society' beyond Sambatyon," *Karmeliyot* 21-22 (1977-1978), pp. 277-291 (Hebrew); Zvi Avni, "Sambation: Recurrence of Tradition," *Jewish Studies* 5 (1997), pp. 147-160 (Hebrew).

3. On the entire episode see Idel, *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 45-61.

4. *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, p. 19. On some mistaken academic attempts to attribute to Abulafia a trinitarian penchant see Idel, *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 55n8. On Abulafia's view of *sefirot* see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 228-232, and Wolfson, "Doctrine of *Sefirot*," pp. 336-371.

5. On the ancient nexus between the two topics see J. Gilbert, "Prophetisme et attente d'un Messie prophète dans l'ancient Judaïsme," in *L'Attente du Messie: Recherches Bibliques* (1954), pp. 85ff; Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, trans. H. Knight and G. Ogg (Lutterworth Press, London, 1969), pp. 352-406; Riesenfeld, *Jesus Transfiguré*, pp. 269-270; Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S. C. Guthrie and Ch. A. M. Hall (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 13-50; Benjamin Sommer, "Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Re-evaluation," *JBL* 115 (1996), pp. 31-47, which includes an up-to-date bibliography (Abulafia is mentioned on pp. 38-39). See also Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration*, *passim*. Compare, however, Stephen Sharot's statement that Abulafia's and other Kabbalists' "mystical experience and prophetic announcements were closely related, their messianism was not a logical outgrowth of their cabbalistic doctrines." *Messianism, Mysticism and Magic*, p. 70.

It should be emphasized that Abulafia, having openly assumed the stance of prophet, at the same time mitigated the apocalyptic traditions. On the nexus between apocalypticism and pseudoeigraphy see Scholem's insightful discussion in *Messianic Idea*, p. 7. The neglect of Abulafia's emphasis on the nexus between prophecy and messianism has produced simplistic statements such as Dan's, "Gershom Scholem and Jewish Messianism," p. 78: "His [Scholem's] findings made it impossible to regard mysticism and messianism as integrally related religious phenomena in Judaism." As to Abulafia's possible source for the nexus between prophecy and messianism see Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 2:32, 36, and Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980), p. 68; Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration*, pp. 112-126. In this context it is important to mention A. Neher's distinction between regular prophecy and what he proposed to call the "Christic prophecy," namely the prophetic phenomena that are believed to be contemporaneous with the Messiah. See *Prophetic Experience*, pp. 61-62, 227. While Abulafia is a clear example of the fusion between the two concepts, Nathan of Gaza is a perfect example for Neher's second category.

6. Abulafia was thirty years of age in 1270, which corresponded to the thirtieth year in the sixth Jewish millennium (5030). See Abulafia's *Commentary* to his own *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 10a. See also Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1980), pp. 103-105. According to Saperstein, the commentary to the *'Aggadot of the Talmud* was composed during the 1250s and had no bearing on Nahmanides' words in the disputation. However, this supposition has yet to be proven. I would tend toward assigning a later date to this work, in the 1280s. See also the parallel contained in the words of R. Levi ben Gershom, better known as Gersonides, noted by Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis*, p. 247n112.

7. *ba'*. Nahmanides discusses here a legend which was adduced by Paulus Christiani in the debate.

8. Exodus 7:26. For Moses as a type of Messiah see Berger, "Three Typological Themes," pp. 142-143.

9. See J. D. Eisenstein, *Otzar ha-Wikkuhim* (New York, 1928), p. 88; Levi, "Apocalypses," p. 112; Silver, *History of Messianic Speculation*, p. 146, note 145; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 128; *idem*, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 459; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 65-66; Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, pp. 116-117; *idem*, *Daggers of Faith* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 91-92, as well as Mark Saperstein, "Jewish Typological Exegesis after Nahmanides," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993), pp. 167-168. The Messiah is placed in Rome according to both talmudic and apocalyptic sources. See esp. *JT*, *Ta'anit*, 64:1; *Sefer Zerubbavel*, in Even Shmuel,

ed., *Midreshet Ge'ullah*, p. 72, where not only Rome is mentioned but also *beit ha-toref*, understood to mean the place for prayer, though it stands for "house of obscenity." See Berger, "Captive at the Gate of Rome," pp. 4-5, 8-11. On Rome and messianism see Urbach, *Sages*, pp. 681-682; Levi, "Apocalypses," p. 112. For a targumic view of the Messiah as coming out of Rome see Wieder, *Judean Scrolls*, p. 46. Thus, Nahmanides' discussion of the meeting of the Messiah with the pope has some earlier apocalyptic sources. For the assumption that the Messiah will come from Rome see also the statement found in the anonymous commentary on the Psalms written in the early sixteenth century, *Sefer Kaf ha-Qetoret*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 846, fol. 125a, and in Yitzhaq Abravanel's *Yeshu'ot Meshi'ah*, translated in Tishby, "Acute Apocalyptic Messianism," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, p. 285n46.

10. Dan, *'Otzar ha-Vikkūhim*, p. 88.

11. Ibid.

12. Cf. the phrase *marana tha*, which means "Our Lord, Come!"

13. On the various sources about the Messiah in Rome see Berger, "Captive at the Gate of Rome," pp. 1-17, as well as Scholem, *Researches in Sabbateanism*, p. 43n75, as well as idem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 12. Abulafia himself was imprisoned in Rome for two weeks after his abortive attempt to meet the pope in Soriano and then the pope's death; cf. Idel, *Chapters on Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 58. These traditions seem to be the background for Guillaume Postel's emphasis throughout his *Restitutio omnium rerum* that the Messiah will come out of Rome, just as Moses did from the desert. See the edition of this book printed at the end of his *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, originally published in Paris in 1552, now reprinted (Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad, Cannstatt, 1994), ed. Wolf Peter Klein, pp. 152-153.

14. On Moses as a messianic figure see H. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet* (Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, 1957). On typology and messianism in general see Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, p. 13n3; Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, p. 75; Saperstein, "Jewish Typological Exegesis," pp. 167-168; Berger, "Three Typological Themes."

15. On this issue see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 134-137. Abulafia's worldview can be described as "apocalyptic dualism" or "dualistic apocalypticism," to use Nickelsburg's phrases; see "The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in 1 Enoch," in Collins and Charlesworth, eds., *Mysteries and Revelations*, p. 63. Abulafia emphasized the duality of intellect and body. Cf. Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 141-143.

16. The original expression is *'adon ha-kol*, which stems from *Sefer Yetzirah*, a book that strongly influenced Abulafia's thought. On "All" in Jewish thought see Elliot Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word *Kol* in Abraham ibn Ezra," *REJ* 149 (1990), pp. 77-111, and Howard Kreisel, "On the Term 'All' in Abraham ibn Ezra: A Reappraisal," *REJ* 153 (1994), pp. 29-66, and their bibliographies.

17. See Abulafia's epistle *Ve-Zot Li-Yhudah*, pp. 18-19, corrected according to Ms. New York, JTS 1887. On the messianic awareness of Abulafia in general see also the useful study of Berger, "The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia," pp. 55-61. For more on the issues dealt with in this passage see my forthcoming "'The Time of the End': Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah," in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. Albert Baumgarten (Brill, Leiden, 1998).

18. In Hebrew *mashiyah* initially meant the anointed one. See Nahmanides' *Disputation*, p. 88, where the Messiah ought to be anointed by Elijah, as part of his advent. See also the texts related to anointment in context of kingship and messianism in Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, s.v. "Anointing," and the discussions of Hahn, *Titles of Jesus*, s.v. "Anointing"; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 14-15; Zeev Weisman, "Anointing as a Motif in the Making of the Charismatic King," *Biblica* 57

(1976), pp. 378-398; Patai, "Hebrew Installation Rites," pp. 166-171. For a similar phenomenon in the Islamicate environment see Israel Friedlander, "Shiitic Influence in Jewish Sectarism," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, pp. 135-136, 157-158, who collected also several examples, including Abulafia, of eschatological anointments. Regarding the connection between the apotheosis of Enoch and anointing with oil, see *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* 22:8, quoted below. For the ancient Christian custom of anointing the infant before baptism as a type of second birth, see Gilles Quispel, *Gnostic Studies* (Nederlands Historische-Archeologisch Institute, Istanbul, 1974), 1:233-236. A similar stand to Abulafia's is found in an anonymous commentary on liturgy stemming from the circle of ecstatic Kabbalists in Spain, where it is said that "it is impossible that a [certain] act will be produced without the influx, and this is the reason why he is called Messiah, because he is anointed with the oil of holy unction." Cf. Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 848, fol. 28b. On this treatise see Moshe Idel, "Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), pp. 170-174. On the redeemer as the influx descending onto the souls of the Jews see a passage from R. Yitzhaq of Acre's *Sefer 'Ozar Hayyim*, discussed by Gottlieb, *Studies*, p. 241. On anointment as a state similar to angels see Greenfield, "Notes," p. 155.

19. Already in the Bible a prophet like Elisha has been anointed, though this is an exceptional case. On ointment as related to the reception of the divine spirit and extraordinary powers see already the king-ideology as represented in 1 Samuel 16:13. See Neher, *Prophetic Existence*, pp. 225-226, where he points out the nexus between the phenomenon of prophecy and anointment, namely messianism, in the case of David. This text presupposes a certain form of divine initiative, at least at the beginning of his career. If this approach is correct, Abulafia, like Nathan of Gaza, belongs to what Leach has called the "icon of subversion," namely a religious paradigm which assumes that millenarian revelations are direct and do not involve hierarchical mediation of priests and rituals. See *L'unité de l'homme*, p. 224. Abulafia's approach is much more anomian than that of other Kabbalists, whose millenarian approach fits what Leach called the "icon of orthodoxy." *Ibid.*, p. 223.

20. Zach. 9:10. On this verse see in Nahmanides' controversy with Paulo Christiani, cf. Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, pp. 126-127. In general, the ancient concept of the ideal Israelite king was connected to universal recognition and dominion over all nations.

21. Compare this quite conspicuous messianic understanding of *devequt* to the various statements of Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, pp. 51, 185, 194, 204.

22. See Abulafia's *Sefer Mafteh ha-Tikkhehot*, a commentary on Deuteronomy, Ms. Oxford 1605, fol. 46b. On the miraculous powers of the prophet in Abulafia and the influence on R. Moses Narboni see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 63-65. In this quotation, as in some others cited above, his Kabbalah and messianism, including some apocalyptic expressions, are linked. See, however, Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 15, one of the very few instances where he mentioned Abulafia in this important book on messianism: "Apocalyptic messianism and kabbalah remained distinct spheres of religious life."

23. *Sefer 'Ozar Eden Ganzu*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 32b.

24. *Me-rov hidabbego*. Here there is a conspicuous case where intense cleaving has explicit messianic overtones. Or, to put it differently, the Messiah may be conceived of as the perfect philosopher and identical to the intellectual ruler of the Greek political tradition, especially the Platonic one. For another claim by a messianic figure, R. Shemariyah of Negroponti, that he had adhered to the separate intellects, see R. Moses de-Rocca Mibara's testimony printed in Aescoly, *Messianic Movements*, p. 243. Aescoly had already suggested that the Greek author might have been influenced by Abulafia. R. Shemariyah flourished during the first part of the fourteenth century, and his extant writings, which do not include messianic speculations, are philosophically oriented.

25. See Abulafia's *Commentary on Sefer ha-Melitz*, Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 9a; Ms. München 285, fol. 13a; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 66, and idem, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 127, 140. Abulafia and some views found in the circle of the *Zohar* presuppose both a transcendent and a human Messiah. Compare, however, Mowinckel's remark that there are no such Messiahs in later Judaism, *He That Cometh*, p. 467. I would say that when a supernal Messiah was included in the constellation of messianic ideas, the more popular concept of two human Messiahs was mitigated, marginalizing the figure of the Messiah ben Joseph.

26. On the various concepts of the Agent Intellect in the Middle Ages see the important survey of the philosophical understandings of this term by Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*. More recently Davidson has proposed a reading of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* that presupposes the possibility of the union between the Agent Intellect and the human one, offering thereby a vision of Maimonides that is closer to Abulafia's than to the more common perception of Maimonides as representing a much more agnostic approach, as it emerges from the studies of Shlomo Pines. See his "Maimonides on Metaphysical Knowledge," *Maimonidean Studies*, ed. A. Hyman, 3 (1992-1993), pp. 49-103, and, from other perspectives, Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration*, pp. 69-126, and David Blumenthal, "Maimonides' Intellectualist Mysticism and the Superiority of the Prophecy of Moses," *Studies in Medieval Culture* 10 (1981), pp. 51-67. Mystical potentials of this concept in medieval philosophy have been explored in detail by Merlan, *Monopsychism*. For the mystical overtones of this concept in Islamic mysticism see the various studies of Corbin, especially his *Creative Imagination*, pp. 10-11, 17-18, 80; idem, *Cyclical Time*, p. 76; and, following him while stressing the more Averroistic understanding, Durand, *Figures mythiques*, pp. 78, 80.

27. The identification of Metatron with the Agent Intellect was quite widespread in the Middle Ages. See e.g. R. Moses ibn Tibbon, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*; R. Levi ben Abraham, *Liyat Hen*, Ms. München 58, fol. 11a; Yitzhaq Albalag, *Sefer Tiqqun Ha-De'ot*, ed. Georges Vajda (Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1973), p. 58, and Georges Vajda, *Isaac Albalag, Averroïste Juif, Traducteur et Annotateur d'Al-Ghazali*, (J. Vrin, Paris, 1960), pp. 201-203. On the Kabbalistic side, the two terms are related to each other in some texts already before Abulafia's floruit. See R. Yitzhaq ben Jacob ha-Kohen, *Commentary on the Chariot of Ezekiel*, ed. Gershom Scholem, *Tarbiz* 2 (1931), p. 202, and the pertinent footnotes of the editor, or R. Barukh Togarmi, *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah*, as analyzed in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 76. Compare, however, to J. Wach's assertion that forms of philosophies that include salvific elements have drawn them from some forms of religious systems, as the different forms of Platonism show. Cf. his introduction, pp. 194-195. It may easily be shown, however, that religious explanations of redemptive concepts also owe a lot to Platonic thinking. See, in the case of Judaism and Islam, chap. 1, pp. 51-53. For Halpern's thesis see *Constitution*, pp. 249-256.

28. Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 67b; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 53. As I have attempted to show elsewhere, the term *na'ar*, when occurring in the context of Metatron, should be understood as pointing to a high-ranking official and not to a servant, as some modern scholars assume. See Idel, "Metatron," pp. 36. As to this meaning of *na'ar* in ancient texts, some which predate the Enochic literature, see Nahman Avigad, "The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society," in P. D. Miller, Jr., P. H. Hanson, and S. D. McBride, eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1987), p. 205, and see also Halpern, *Constitution*, pp. 126-130; Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 312-313; Halpern, "Hekhalot and Mi'raj," pp. 281-282; and Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp. 275-276, 280-281. I would like to suggest here another possible nexus between Heikhalot literature and apocalypticism. In a lengthy description of Metatron, where the appellation *na'ar* occurs several times, the precious stone of this angel is designated 'amiel. See Schaefer, *Synopse*, par. 487. On the other hand, one of

the names of the Messiah is Menahem ben 'Amiel. See Patai, *Messiah Texts*, pp. 24, 26-27, 122-123. For the time being there is no good explanation for the name 'Amiel, and I propose to see a nexus between the Menahem ben 'Amiel and the term 'amiel in the *Heikhalot* text.

29. Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 88-89, 92; idem, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 116-119. For another explicit identification of the Messiah with Metatron and *na'ar* see Abulafia's commentary on Exodus, entitled *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 77a. For a possible talmudic nexus between a figure close to Metatron and the Messiah see Liebes, *Studies in Jewish Myth*, pp. 44-45. See also Elqayam, *Mystery of Faith*, pp. 325-326, who suggested that Abulafia's equation of Metatron and Messiah may be of Christian origin. Without denying the possible influence of Christian soteriology on Abulafia in principle, it seems that at least in this particular case a direct Christian impact on the ecstatic Kabbalist is rather implausible.

30. Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 680, fol. 292a.

31. See the anonymous collectanea, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 776, fol. 192b, and Oxford 1949, no pagination, summarizing a view expressed by Abulafia in his *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekhel*, Ms. Vatican 233, fols. 117b-118b, as well as the discussion in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 12-13. The emanation of an emanation stands, apparently, for the human intellectual potential. On the hylic intellect in general see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes*, pp. 61-68, 100-102, 258-262, 282-289. It seems that although in the last quotation a more Avicennian view of the material intellect is found, in some other discussions of Abulafia this term is closer to Averroes' views on the topic. See also Alexander Altmann, "Homo Imago Dei in Jewish and Christian Theology," *Journal of Religion* 48 (1948), p. 255.

32. *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 777, fol. 109. This passage has been printed by Jellinek as an addendum to *Sefer ha-'Or*, p. 84. For an analysis of the context of this passage, see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 15-16; idem, "Enoch Is Metatron," p. 236, and appendix 1 below, as well as my discussion of a passage from Nathan of Gaza, chap. 6. In R. Yehudah Albotini's *Sefer Sullam ha-'Aliyah*, p. 74, Abulafia's text has been appropriated in order to describe the exit of the mystic from the realm of the human and its entrance into that of the divine. On Metatron and the concept of Face see Idel, "Metatron," pp. 36-37. For another important example in Abulafia of the messianic understanding of Enoch qua Metatron see *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fols. 129b-130a. The occurrence of the terms *anointed* and *messenger* demonstrates that the extreme mystic experience does not culminate in an escapist vision but is part of a preparation for a more active role to be played afterwards. Indeed, as we learn from another discussion in the same book, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 79b, the only pretext for returning "from God" is to instruct other people, which for Abulafia is a messianic enterprise.

33. See *The Slavonic Book of Enoch*, 22:8-10; *Le Livre des secrets d'Henoch*, ed. A. Vaillant (Paris, 1952), pp. 26, 18-27; Segal, "Paul and the Beginning of the Jewish Mysticism," p. 105; Matthew Black, "The Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission and the 'Son of Man,'" in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquities: Essays in Honor of W. D. Davies* (Brill, Leiden, 1976), pp. 57-73; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, p. 40; Hurtado, *One God*, pp. 53-54.

34. On these two elements see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Concept of *Mashiah* and Messianism in Early Judaism," in Charlesworth, ed., *Messiah*, p. 83.

35. Some discussions of Sabbatai Tzevi's anointment have been collected by Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 140-142.

36. 'Al BaM is a method of letter permutation which exchanges the first and last letters of the alphabet, the second and penultimate, and so on. Accordingly, *ShaDaY* is converted into *BQM*.

37. From this point on, until the word "Mohammed," the whole passage is omitted from the

Rome-Angelica manuscript, presumably out of fear of the censor. On Abulafia and blessing see below, appendix 1, where he derives one of his own theophoric names from the term "blessing."

38. Ms. Munich 285, fol. 22a; Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 22a. This section is based on a long line of numerological equivalences, only some of which will be deciphered below. On Abulafia as one of several prophets of his time see below, Appendix 1. On the formula "I am" used in the quoted passage see Widengren, *Muhammad*, pp. 48-54; T. W. Manson, "The Ego Eimi of the Messianic Presence in the New Testament," *Journal of Theological Studies* 48, (1947), pp. 137ff. The hint at the Messiah's building upon Jesus and Mohammed is perhaps related to the medieval supposition, found in such Jewish thinkers as R. Yehudah ha-Levi and Maimonides, as to the role of these religions in paving the way for the final messianic recognition of Judaism. On Jesus as Messiah in Sabbatean sources see Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 398nn18,19; 440n90.

39. See Ms. Oxford 1649, fol. 206a, discussed in more detail in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 11-12. For the intellectual nature of redemption in this text see also Ms. Oxford 1649, fols. 201b-202a. In an important revelation Abulafia has the angel Yaho'el addressing him as "My son." On a scholarly interpretation of Psalm 2 in the context of the royal sonship see more recently Jon D. Levenson, "The Jerusalem Temple in the Devotional and Visionary Experience," in Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality*, 1:47-49; idem, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993), pp. 203-205; idem, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 97-101; Patai, "Hebrew Installation Rites," pp. 169, 186. For scholarly discussions of the adoption and Sonship of the Israelite kings in general see e.g. Aubrey R. Johnson, in Hooke, ed., *Labyrinth*, pp. 79-81; idem, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 28-30; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 96-98; Halpern, *Constitution*, pp. 128-130, 146; De Fraine, *L'aspect religieux*, pp. 236-249, 271-276; E. Huntress, "The Son of God" in Jewish Writings Prior to the Christian Era," *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 117-123; Jan Assmann, "Die Zeugung des Sohnes," in J. Assmann et al., eds., *Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos* (Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1982), pp. 13-61.

40. See M. Idel, "On the History of the Interdiction against the Study of Kabbalah before the Age of Forty," *AJSR* 5 (1980), pp. 1-20 (Hebrew); idem, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 138-143, 195-203. For the anointment of the son of the king, alluded to by Abulafia in the above quotation, see 2 Kings 11:12. The occurrence of the name Shaday in this context may point to Metatron, which is numerically related to the name Shaday. See below, appendix 1.

41. See Ravitsky, "Maimonides on the Days of the Messiah," pp. 245-249.

42. Rosenberg, "The Return to the Garden of Eden," pp. 79-80.

43. Zach. 9:9. On the meaning of this verse in the biblical context see Yair Zakovitz, "Poor and Riding an Ass," in *Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 7-17 (Hebrew).

44. See Idel, "Types of Messianic Activities," pp. 255-256. Abulafia also addressed this verse in a manner reminiscent of the later Midrash, when he described Metatron, the Messiah, as riding on the angel Sandalphon, which designates (in Abulafian terminology) the material. See *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York JTS, 1897, fol. 77a. See also Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 75-78. An interesting case of describing redemption as the salvation of intellectual soul from the exile of the evil drive, which is said to be a hindrance to intellection, is found in the work of a Kabbalist who was a student of Abraham Abulafia: R. Joseph Gikatilla's *Commentary on the Passover Haggadah*, in M. Kasher and S. Ashkenazi, eds., *Haggadah Shelemah* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 114 (Hebrew).

45. See note 24 above and Berger, "The Messianic Self-Consciousness," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, p. 253.

46. R. Moses ibn Tibbon, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Meqitzei Nirdamim, Lyck, 1874), preface, p. 12. Compare also ibid., p. 13, and in the commentary itself fols. 14a, 15a, 21a and the

allegorical interpretations of *Go'el* and *Moshi'îm*, in another book by the same author, *Sefer Pe'ah*, Ms. Oxford 939, fol. 27ab. See also M. Idel, "Jerusalem in Thirteenth-Century Jewish Thought," in Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammay, eds., *The History of Jerusalem, Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099-1250)* (Yad Izhaq Ben-Zvi Publications, Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 284-286 (Hebrew). On the mystical sources of the above quotation see the review of the edition on the *Commentary on Song of Songs* printed in Bruell's *Jahrbuch für Jüdischen Geschichte und Literatur*, vol. 3 (1877), p. 175. On this commentary on the Song of Songs see Menachem Kellner, "Communication or the Lack Thereof among Thirteenth-Fourteenth Century Provençal Jewish Philosophers: Moses ibn Tibbon and Gersonides on Song of Songs," in Sophia Menache, ed., *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora: The Pre-Modern World* (Brill, Leiden, New York, Koeln, 1996), pp. 227-254. On the identification between Metatron and the Agent Intellect see Georges Vajda, "Pour le Dossier de Metatron," in R. Lowe and S. Stein, eds., *Hokhma Bina veDaat: Studies in Jewish History and Thought Presented to A. Altmann* (University of Alabama Press, University, Ala., 1979), pp. 345-354.

47. On this book and Abulafia's impact on it see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 200-201, 223-224. On the influence of Abulafia's eschatology on a fourteenth-century philosopher, R. Moses Narboni, see idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 66.

48. Or "messengers." According to the view that the name "ben David" refers to an angel, we may see it as an allegory for the Agent Intellect, which has already been identified with the Messiah in some of Abulafia's text.

49. *BT, Yevamot*, fol. 62a. For a spiritualization of Elijah in a Messianic context see also the philosophical texts adduced by Schwartz, "Neutralization of the Messianic Idea," p. 52, and below, the discussions of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, ch. 7. On the eschatological function of Elijah see Robert Macina, "Le rôle eschatologique d'Elie le Prophète dans la conversion finale du peuple juif: Positions juives et chrétiennes à la lumière des sources rabbiniques et patristiques," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 31 (1981), pp. 71-99; Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 451-457. For additional examples of spiritual interpretations of the Messiah in philosophical circles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries see Schwartz, "Neutralization," pp. 41-44. Interestingly enough, the more spiritual philosophical conceptualizations of the Messiah as an inner experience have been neglected by Sarachek, *Doctrine of the Messiah*, despite his emphasis on the philosophical literature.

50. *Sefer Toldot 'Adam*, Ms. Oxford 836, fol. 159a-159b. See also ibid., fol. 155b, where the intellectual influx is described as "the redeeming angel," which dwells in men, using the messianic verse from Isaiah 11:2. Compare to another passage, apparently also influenced by Abulafia, found in the work of a Spanish philosopher living in the second half of the fourteenth-century, R. Samuel ibn Tzartzah, *Sefer Mikhlol Yofi*, Ms. Los Angeles, UCLA X 779, fol. 102b: "Know and understand that Ben David is the king Messiah, by the influence of the Agent Intellect onto the human intellect when the latter is *in actu*. And he called the other material powers [by the name] 'souls in body' namely 'Ben David come,' namely the intellect is not able to cleave to the Agent Intellect, until the exhaustion of all the souls from the body, which are the material powers." Beyond the conceptual resemblance between this passage and Abulafia's eschatological allegory, in *Mikhlol Yofi* the gematria *yisra'el* = *sekhel ha-po'el* = 541 occurs. See ibid., fol. 62b. The Hebrew passage has been printed in Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 452. This and many other examples, including some adduced above, demonstrate that the history of the term *Agent Intellect* in Jewish philosophy should be studied in the light of the Greek and Arabic traditions, as has been done superbly by Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, and in the light of the inner structure of Jewish thinking as represented by rabbinic and mystical concepts. See Davidson, *Alfarabi*, p. 209.

51. 'Od Davar, p. 271. Though Scholem was indubitably aware of Abulafia's discussions, he nevertheless preferred to ignore them in his numerous discussions on messianism. For example,

Abulafia's name is totally absent in Scholem's most important collection of articles, *The Messianic Idea*; it is neglected in *Researches on Sabbateanism* and completely marginalized in his *Sabbatai Sevi*, a fact that is curious when the ignored figure is the first major Jewish mystic who proclaimed himself to be a Messiah and whose writings were extant, some fragments of them even having been studied by Sabbatai Tzevi.

52. On individualistic redemption in Judaism see Rosenberg, "Return to the Garden of Eden," pp. 84-86; Schwartz, "Neutralization of the Messianic Idea," pp. 41-44.

53. See Dan's ignoring—apparently following the later Scholem's marginalization—of Abulafia, in his "Gershom Scholem and Jewish Messianism," pp. 77-78. Dan's descriptive presentation reflects a fragmentary view of Kabbalah and ignorance of modern research on the subject that he attempts to present.

54. See Wach's essay, "The Savior in the History of Religion," in *Introduction*, p. 179, also pp. 191-193.

55. See *ibid.*, pp. 179-180, 190-191.

56. *On the Kabbalah*, p. 2.

57. It is quite difficult to determine what exactly the term *memshalah* means in Abulafia's texts. Though it conspicuously reflects a certain form of sovereignty, its more precise contours are rather obscure. On the cycles of month and moon as metaphors for the alteration of exile and redemption see R. Jacob ha-Kohen, in Abrams, *Book of Illumination*, pp. 67-68 and later on, in a fascinating text by R. Moses Cordovero printed and analyzed by Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 232-233, and the tradition adduced by R. Ya'akov Tzemah, in the name of R. Hayyim Vital, in a gloss of the latter's *Peri 'Etz Hayyim*, ed. Dubrovna, fol. 108c and in R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, *Me'or 'Einayim*, pp. 7-9.

58. On this issue see Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 399-400.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

60. See Sara O. Heller Wilensky, "Messianism, Eschatology and Utopia in the Philosophical-Mystical Trend of Kabbalah," in Baras, ed., *Messianism and Eschatology*, pp. 235-236 (Hebrew); S. M. Stern, *Aristotle on the World State* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1968), pp. 80-82. On the view that the course of time is causing the actualization of the potential, in a messianic context, see also R. Yehudah Loew of Prague (the Maharal), *Sefer Netzah Yisrael* (Prague, 1599), fol. 38d, chap. 26; see also chaps. 35-36 of this treatise (Hebrew). On the Maharal's messianism in general see Byron L. Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Work of Judah Loew of Prague* (Littman Library, London, Toronto, 1982), pp. 142-160; Rivka Schatz, "Maharal's Doctrine: Between Existence and Eschatology," in Baras, ed., *Messianism and Eschatology*, pp. 301-324; Gross, *Le messianisme juif*; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 65-66. On the notion of actualization as part of the messianic process see also the later material discussed by Liebes, *On Sabbateanism and Its Kabbalah*, pp. 56, 307n62.

61. Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 608, fol. 304a. For an interesting parallel to this view, found in R. Yehudah ibn Matka's *Sefer Midrash Hokhmah*, see Idel, "Some Concepts of Time and History," par. 3.

62. Pines, *Between Jewish Thought*, pp. 277-305. On this issue see also Y. H. Yerushalmi, "Spinoza on the Existence of the Jewish People," *Proceedings of the Israeli Academy of Science* 6, no. 10 (1983), and also Ravitsky, "To the Utmost of Human Capacity," p. 225n7; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 544. The view of a limited messianic period is not new with Abulafia but is already found in ancient apocalyptic texts. See e.g. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, pp. 215-216.

63. Cf. Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 176-177, 196n99.

64. See Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fols. 14b-15a; Ms. Munich 285, fol. 39b. Compare also to

Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 140, 382 and Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 126–127, where some other details of this passage have been analyzed. The reader is invited to complement the reading of our discussion here with the decodings of the gematria, found in these pages, which shall not be repeated in this context.

65. See Idel, *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 58–59. Already in the BT, *Rosh ha-Shanah*, fol. 11ab, there is a dictum claiming that the world was created in the New Year, the people of Israel were redeemed on the New Year, and they will be redeemed again on the New Year. This view was adduced by Abulafia in his *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. Munchen 408, fol. 18a. For redemption on New Year in a somewhat Lurianic vein of Kabbalah, which assumes that this day is the moment for repentance, after which Adam will restore creation to its pristine glory, described as the actualization of the potential, see R. Nahman of Braslav, *Liggatei Halakhot*, *Hilekhot hekhsher Kelim*, chap. 4. For the possibility that the month of Tishrei was the time when the coming of the Messiah was expected see Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 350–351.

66. See P. Volz, *Die Neujahrfest Jahwes* (Mohr, Tübingen, 1912); Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:106–107; idem, *He That Cometh*, pp. 139–143; *Zum israelitischen Neujahr und zur Deutung der Thronbesteigungspsalmen* (Oslo, 1953); Julian Morgenstern, "The New Year of Kings," in B. Schindler and A. Marmorstein, eds., *Occident and Orient: In Honour of Haham Dr. M. Gaster's 80th Birthday, Gaster Anniversary Volume* (Taylor's Foreign Press, London, 1936), pp. 439–456; idem, "The Mythological Background of Ps. 82," *HUCA* 14 (1939), pp. 44–70; idem, "The Cultic Setting of the 'Enthronement Psalms,'" *HUCA* 35 (1964), pp. 1–42; Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum*, pp. 62–79; Patai, "Hebrew Installation Rites," pp. 172, 188; Moshe Weinfeld, "Expectation of the Kingdom of God in the Bible," in Baras, ed., *Messianism and Eschatology*, pp. 73–96 (Hebrew); A. J. Wensinck, "The Semitic New Year and the Origin of Eschatology," *Acta Orientalia* 1 (1923), pp. 158–199; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 313–333; Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, pp. 33–36, 201; Halpern, *Constitution*, pp. 95–109; Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, pp. 51–73; Patai, *Man and Temple*, pp. 38–40. See also below, app. 2, n. 41. For a critique of the myth-and-ritual connection between the Jewish New Year and coronation of the king see Norman H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1947), pp. 207–208. For other instances of redemption expected at the New Year, unrelated to Abulafia, see Abraham Michael Cardoso's prophecy concerning the beginning of redemption at the New Year of 1674; cf. *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 361 as well as my discussion of the Besht, below, chap. 7. It should be mentioned that the phrase *beit ha-miqdash* is numerically equivalent to *rosh ha-shanah*, namely 861. The nexus between the two phrases was already pointed out by R. Eleazar of Worms, in two of his writings, *Sefer ha-Hokhma* and *Commentary on the Torah*; see *Perush ha-Roqeqah 'al ha-Torah*, ed. S. Y. Kanievsky (Benei Beraq, vol. 1, pp. 17, 54 respectively). Once again the Hasidei Ashkenaz literature preserved an ancient view, which found a more elaborate expression in Abraham Abulafia's thought.

67. See Even Shmuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah*, p. 70; translated in Patai, *Messiah Texts*, pp. 110–111. The double nature of the Messiah, as wounded and beautiful, perhaps influenced Abulafia's view of Metatron as both an old man, a *sheikh*, and a *na'ar*. See Idel, *Mystical Experience*, p. 117; idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 94, and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphic divine et transformations d'un mythologeme: 'L'Apocryphon de Jean' et ses sources," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1981), pp. 422–424, now in his *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 56–59. On the importance of beauty in general in the Heikhalot literature and related ancient texts see Rachel Elior, "The Concept of God in Hekhalot Literature," *JSJT* 6, pp. 13–58 (Hebrew), and Deutsch, *Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 94–99. On the messianic overtones of R. Gadiel the infant, also described as *na'ar*, a figure that occurs in the pseudopigraphic *Seder Gan 'Eden*, and its similarity to Metatron see Scholem, *Devarim be-Go*, p.

280, and Liebes, "The Angels of the Shofar," p. 182. See also Liebes's discussion of revelations of young and old in the *Zohar*, "Myth vs. Symbol," pp. 219-223.

68. Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," pp. 65-66.

69. On this expression as pointing to *unio mystica* see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 10-12; idem, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 126-128. Here we have an important case which opens the way for a reading of the *mashiyyah* as a divine entity when functioning as a messianic figure according to Abulafia's understanding of the term *Messiah*. Compare, however, Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 334.

70. See especially *Sefer ha-'Or* and the passage from this book translated by Patai, *Messiah Texts*, pp. 178-180. On the apocalyptic nature of *Sefer ha-'Or* see Aescoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements*, p. 231. On the coexistence of two modes of approaching other topics related to messianism—the Temple and Jerusalem—see the interesting remarks of Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 178-182; Idel, "Land of Israel," pp. 193-195. Compare, however, Taubes, "Price of Messianism," p. 496, who sees interiorization as the result of a "crisis within Jewish eschatology itself." This statement implies that there is one single messianic idea characteristic of Jewish eschatology which, when faltering, produces spiritualization, a view which is not far from the way Scholem portrayed the spiritualization of early sixteenth-century apocalypticism in Kabbalah of Safed. This attitude assumes the impossibility of coexistence of the different modes of redemption, an issue that seems to me to be simplistic. On allegorical interpretations of messianic issues in Abulafia see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 53.

71. Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fols. 129b-130b; Idel, *Mystical Experience*, p. 118. For a more explicit connection between Metatron, *mashiyyah*, and Son see Abulafia's succinct remark in his commentary on Exodus, *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York, JTS 1897, fol. 77a.

72. *Medabber*. In the Middle Ages, this term can also be translated as "thinking." Nevertheless, the Agent Intellect is characterized by Abulafia in linguistic terms, several times in his writings, including its description as the primordial speech. See the material on speech and the Agent Intellect collected and discussed in Idel, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 92-93. A connection between the word and the Messiah is found already in the Gospel of John, which may have been influenced by Philo. See Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 68-73, 263-285, 318-332. For more on speech and messianism in Abulafia see below, app. 1, and in the discussions on speech and messianism in chap. 7. Both in ecstatic Kabbalah and in some Hasidic schools, the assumption of the existence of an ontological linguistic level, which plays a role in the messianic event, is determinative of the respective forms of messianism. The two forms of Jewish mysticism conspicuously emphasize the linguistic and audative aspects of human activity. Compare, however, Wolfson's assertion, *Through a Speculum*, as to the dominant visual aspect of Jewish mysticism.

73. This text is influenced by the Hebrew translation of Abu Nasr Al-Farabi's treatise, called *Hathalat ha-Nimtz'aot*. Filipowski, ed., printed in *He-'Asif* (London, 1847), p. 2. The same context has been quoted verbatim in another commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed* by Abulafia, *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. München 408, fol. 12b. See already the remarks of Moritz Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi* (St. Petersburg, 1869), p. 243.

74. "Eliyahu, like *ben*, means 'son' and is numerically equivalent to fifty-two.

75. In gematria, fifty-two equals twice the Tetragrammaton, as hinted at by "double name."

76. *Hu' ha-Go'el* in gematria equals fifty-two, as do the two following words. *Ba-kol* may point to an immanentistic theology. The description "ruler of the world" reflects both the talmudic concept of the prince of the world and the kingly perception of this figure in the Hebrew Enoch. For the same expression, *manhig ha-'olam*, in the context of Metatron see R. Eleazar of Worms, *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, Ms. Oxford 1568, fol. 21a, quoted by Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 259-260. On

the concept of the ruler of the world in ancient Jewish texts see Alan F. Segal, "Ruler of This World: Attitudes about Mediator Figures and the Importance of Sociology for Self-Definition," in E. P. Sanders and A. Mendelsohn, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1981), 2:245-268; Couliano, *Experiences de l'extase*, pp. 69-70. On Metatron as appointed over the world see also a text analyzed in Idel, "Kabbalistic Prayer," pp. 272-273, and *idem*, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 92.

77. See esp. Abrams, "Boundaries," p. 301.

78. See Hurtado, *One God*, pp. 79-81. Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 289, 318-321, has pointed out the significance of this angel within earlier Jewish traditions. See esp. p. 320, where he suggests a certain nexus between Yaho'el and the high priest, a motif that recurs in the case of Metatron later on. See also p. 307, where Fossum mentions the plausibility that Yao is a name of the Christ and has to do with a savior figure. The single instance when Yaho'el is mentioned together with Abraham in Jewish tradition, except in the Apocalypse of Abraham, is a passage in R. 'Ephrayim ben Shimshon's *Commentary on the Torah*, 1:77, where the term *ba-kol* was interpreted, again by means of gematria, as pointing to Yaho'el, described as a magical name that belongs to the Prince of the Face. However, I doubt very much if Abraham Abulafia's encounter with Yaho'el stems from this passage.

79. G. H. Box, *Apocalypse of Abraham* (London, 1918) p. xxv; Odeberg, *Hebrew Enoch*, pp. 99, 144; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 68-69; *idem*, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 187; *idem*, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 51; *idem*, *Kabbalah*, p. 378; Smith, *Map*, pp. 51-53; Greenfield, *Prolegomenon*, p. xxxi; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, p. 224; Deutsch, *Gnostic Imagination*, pp. 52, 97-98; Schultz and Spatz, *Sinai and Olympus*, p. 652. For the occurrence of the two names in a text printed by Montgomery see Greenfield, *Prolegomenon*, p. xxxix; *idem*, "Notes," p. 156.

80. Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 68-69; *idem*, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 89, 186-187.

81. An issue that I cannot enter into here is whether Abulafia had access to a version of the Ashkenazi text where some additions have been inserted and was acquainted with less than the "original" Ashkenazi passage. On the Ashkenazi influence on Abulafia's Kabbalah see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 22-24.

82. See the version printed by Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, p. 221.

83. Exodus 23:20-21. On the theology of the divine name in ancient Judaeo-Christian tradition see the detailed treatment of Danielou, *Theologie du Judeo-Christianisme*, pp. 71, 75, 235-251, and Fossum, *Name of God*, *passim*, esp. pp. 81-82.

84. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 68.

85. See Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, pp. 58-59, 62, 74, 79, 82-83; Deutsch, *Gnostic Imagination*, p. 98.

86. Liebes, "Angel of the Shofar."

87. See the version established by Liebes, "Angels of the Shofar," p. 176.

88. The scholarly literature on this issue is vast. Basic references include Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 526-534; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 346-450; J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958), pp. 225-242; T. W. Manson, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library* 32, (1950), pp. 171-193; Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 241-249; Mueller, *Messias und Menschensohn*, *passim*; Black, "Throne-Theophany Prophetic Commission"; Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origin of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988), pp. 50-52, 84-85, 138-139; Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 64-65, 190-191; Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos*, pp. 172-173.

89. Son of Man: see Mueller, *Messias und Menschensohn*, pp. 54-60; eschatological judge: see

Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 393-399; in Ashkenazi text: see Liebes, "Angels of the Shofar," p. 175.

90. Patai, *Messiah Texts*, p. 167. On messianism in this book see Michael Stone, "The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra," in Neusner et al., eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, pp. 209-224, as well as his many discussions in his *Fourth Ezra*; J. H. Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology," in Neusner et al., eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, pp. 241-245.

91. See Idel, "Enoch Is Metatron"; idem, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 195-203.

92. See *Sefer Livyat Hen*, Ms. Vatican 192, fol. 76a, Ms. Munich 58, fol. 153a. On this treatise see Colette Sirat, "Les différentes versions du Liwyat Hen de Levi ben Abraham," *REJ* 122 (1963), pp. 167-177.

93. H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning* (New York, 1969), 1:243.

94. See the anonymous *Sefer ha-Tzeruf*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 192b. See also Wolfson, "Doctrine of the Sefirot," p. 370n101.

95. See Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola*, pp. 231-233.

96. Collins, "Place of Apocalypticism," 541-542, 549; idem, *Apocalyptic Vision*, pp. 96-104. On the great importance of descriptions related to Enoch in ancient Jewish literature for the proper understanding of ancient Christianity see the outstanding remarks by Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 531-534; Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 295-298. For Enoch in magic bowls see Greenfield, "Notes," pp. 150-154.

97. See Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, p. 357.

98. See Moshe Idel, "Hermeticism and Judaism," in I. Merkl and A. Debus, eds., *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* (Cranbury, N.J., Folger Library, 1988), pp. 59-76; Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 138-140.

99. This is the case with the references in the book of the Zohar to Books of Enoch which are dismissed as pseudopigraphy. For Abulafia's testimony that there is a "Kabbalah," about whose content he is not so happy, as it deals with corporeal survival—and apparently also their return in the eschaton—related to Enoch and 'Eliyahu which was accepted, as Abulafia explicitly indicates, even by the Christians—see *Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 132b. On the corporeal ascent of these two martyrs in ancient Christianity see Danielou, *Theologie du Judeo-Christianisme*, p. 79. The whole question of the mention of books of Enoch in the Zohar and in Moses de Leon's Hebrew writings has not been examined closely by any scholar since Jellinek. See his *Bet ha-Midrasch*, 3:195-197 and Scholem's interesting remark in *Major Trends*, p. 200. For the impact of parts of Enochic literature on Manicheanism see John C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony* (Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati, 1992).

100. I hope to deal with the impact of Enochic traditions on Hasidism in a separate study. For the time being, see the mid-nineteenth-century view of R. Yehudah Leib of Yanov, *Sefer Qol Yehudah* (NP, 1906), reprinted in *Sefarim Qedoshim mi-Talmidei ha-Besht* (Brookline, Mass., 1984), vol. 14, fol. 21cd., where the theory of mystical union between the human and Agent Intellect is related to both the intellection of God and the transformation of Enoch into Metatron. Compare also ibid., fol. 3ab. On Mormonism see Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Deseret Book Co., Salt Lake City, 1986); Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1992), pp. 99, 105.

101. In fact the concept of enthronement is obvious already in the Ethiopian Enoch; see the lengthy discussion of Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 388-390.

102. See Widengren, *Muhammad*, pp. 199-213.

103. *Ha-pitronot*. Another possible translation would be the interpretation of enigmatic visions.

104. *Be-mareh*. It is quite reasonable to assume that Abulafia is hinting at his first name, Abraham, an anagram of *be-Maréh*.

105. *Ho'il*. This is a pun on *Yaho'el*. On p. 85 the same verb is used in order to point to God's agreement to redeem.

106. In gematria 248 is the value of Abraham, Abulafia's name. This name recurs on p. 85.

107. This name is numerically equivalent to *Shmu'el*, the name of Abulafia's father.

108. *Meshibiy*, "my Messiah," is an anagram of *hamiyshiy*. This pun is found already in R. Eleazar of Worms' *Commentary on the Torah* (see n. 66, above), vol. 1, p. 77, and in R. Efrayim ben Shimshon's *Perush 'al ha-Torah*, 1:11. See also R. Yitzhaq of Acre's description of the ascending process of cleaving, which culminates with the fifth stage, the union with the Infinite; cf. Ms. Moscow-Guensburg 775, fol. 233b.

109. *Sefer ha-'Ot*, pp. 84-85.

110. See the translation of R. Rubinkiewicz, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, J. J. Charlesworth ed. (Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1983) 1:697, par. 9. In *Sefer ha-'Ot* (as quoted above) and the Apocalypse of Abraham the same angel is causing Abraham to get to his feet after he fell on his face. As it has been pointed out, the Apocalypse, preserved only in ancient Russian, reflects a Hebrew original. See A. Rubinstein, "Hebraisms in Slavonic 'Apocalypse of Abraham,'" *JJS* 4 (1953), pp. 108-115; 5 (1954), pp. 132-135. Since since it seems improbable that the connection between *Yaho'el* and Abraham is mere coincidence, or that Abulafia's story about his encounter is derived from the Hebrew material I am acquainted with, I suggest that Abulafia may have known an inextant version of the Apocalypse of Abraham—perhaps a Greek version in Byzantium.

111. On this issue see Martha Himmelfarb, "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *AJSR* 9, no. 1 (1984), pp. 55-78.

112. See Exodus 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8.

113. *Liy hu*: an anagram of *'Eliyahu*.

114. *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 777, fol. 113a; Ms. Oxford 1582, fols. 22b-23a.

115. *Hanokh ben Yared*. The numerical value of this phrase is 350, which is precisely that of *mokhiah dabbraniy*. In *Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 130a, Abulafia quoted from a version of the Ashkenazi treatise mentioned above, and there it is written that Metatron is called Enoch.

116. *Mokhiah dabbraniy*. This is an unusual expression, which was created in order to meet the numerical equivalence.

117. *Banu*. On this issue see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 83-86.

118. There is a venerable Christian tradition about the arrival of the two harbingers before the second coming of the Christ. However, one cannot exclude the possibility of an earlier Jewish tradition that influenced the Christian one and was marginalized in Jewish circles, to the extent that only Elijah remained the harbinger of the messianic message. Abulafia himself mentions this tradition in his *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 132b, and see Liebes, "Angels of the Shofar," pp. 178-179; Idel, "Enoch Is Metatron," p. 227.

119. Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 13b.

120. *Commentary on Ma'arekhet ha-'Elohot*, fol. 96b. See also Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 220-221, and *Yalqut Re'uveni*, passim.

121. Idel, "Enoch Is Metatron," p. 229.

122. Liebes, "Angels of the Shofar," p. 175.

123. Liebes, *ibid.*, interprets it as pointing to Jesus.

124. See Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 221-222.

125. *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 130a.

126. Ms. München 408, fol. 36b.

127. Job 19:26. On the medieval interpretations of this verse see Alexander Altmann, *Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung* (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1987), pp. 1-33.

128. "My heart." On the heart as the locus of revelation see the above quotation from *Sefer ha-Hesheq*.

129. Ms. München 11, fol. 152b.

130. Compare the former's *Perush 'al ha-Torah*, 1:106, where he uses the numerical value of the unusual term *seter* to extract the value of 'elef ve-ra"tz. Abulafia also uses this term for messianic computations. See e.g. *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. München 316, fol. 328b.

131. On the possible source of apocalypticism in priestly groups see Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, pp. 71-74, 215-218. For the identification of the king with the high priest as part of the royal ideology see Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum*, pp. 17-33; E. O. James, "The Sacred Kingship and the Priesthood," in *The Sacral Kingship*, pp. 63-70; Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 94n22, 97, 186, 284-287. For a medieval instance of a Messiah that was a Kohen, see Mann, "Messianic Movements," pp. 336, 338. Mann has already pointed out the similarity between this Messiah, who was a Karaite, and the Qumran view, found in *The Damascus Document*, 19:10-11, where the Messiah is also a descendant of Aharon. See also his "Obadya, Proselyte Normand Converti au Judaisme, et Sa Meguilla," *REJ* 89 (1930), pp. 255-256. The possible link between the priestly nature of the Messiah in Qumran and in the case of the Karaite, pointed out already by Mann, has passed unnoticed by Wieder, *Judean Scrolls*, pp. 54-55n2, whose important book is devoted to the affinities between Karaism and the Qumran sect. See, however, the crucial remark of Baron, "Reappearance of Pseudo-Messiahs," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, pp. 245-246. See also Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, pp. 65, 188 note 185. The existence of the Karaite Kohen who also claimed to be the Messiah in the early twelfth century may serve as an example for the possibility of a continuation of ancient messianic themes from antiquity until thirteenth-century Kabbalah. The nexus between the power of the Messiah to perform miracles by the spirit of his lips and Aharon's being the speaker for Moses is found in the collectanea of Kabbalistic traditions stemming from Shlomo Molkho's entourage, Ms. Moscow-Guensburg 302. On a much later assumption that the Messiah is Moses, and thus a Kohen, see Manor, *Exile and Redemption*, p. 197. A contemporary of Abulafia, R. Levi ben Abraham, claims that "the [term] Mashiyah will designate only the most noble and the greatest among the human rulers, [one who is] a Kohen, Mashiyah and King." *Sefer Livyat Hen*, printed in *Ginzei Nistarot* (1875), p. 137.

132. Ms. New York, JTS 843, fol. 86a. See also Berger, "Abraham Abulafia," in Saperstein, ed., *Essential Papers*, p. 251, who claims that Abulafia was influenced by the Christian view of Melchizedek. Berger's view that in this passage Abulafia identifies with his wife following speculation related to the perfection of the androgynous state seems to me more than dubious.

133. On Melchizedek see Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 47-48, 53, 131, 136; Paul J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresha* (Catholic Biblical Association of America, Washington, 1987); Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 186-192, 255-260, 265; Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism*, pp. 14-15, 23, 25-26, 108-123, 184-188; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Mahanayim*, vol. 124 (1970), pp. 93-94 (Hebrew); Greenfield, *Prolegomenon*, pp. xx-xxi; Hurtado, *One God*, pp. 78-79; Leach, *L'unité de l'homme*, pp. 240-259; Fossum, *Name of God*, pp. 183-187; Couliano, *Experiences de l'extase*, pp. 73-74. On medieval reverberations of this figure see Georges Vajda, "Melchisedec dans la mythologie ismaïlienne," *Journal Asiatique* 234 (1943-45), pp. 173-183. For more on Melchizedek in Abulafia see Wolfson, "Doctrine of Sefirot," pp. 364-365. Extremely important in the context of the nexus between Abulafia and Melchizedek is a passage in *Leviticus Rabba* 25:6 where the

priesthood is described as taken away from Melchizedek and given to Abraham. See also BT, *Nedarim*, fol. 32b. Abulafia, unlike the Christian sources, was concerned not with the superiority of the priestly Melchizedek but with his rendering his priesthood to Abraham. André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Minister*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., 1975).

134. BT, *Qiddushin*, fol. 71a.

135. Here the term *qabbalah* may stand for either tradition in the broader sense of the word or, more plausibly, the Kabbalistic tradition, which was related in several early medieval texts, pre-Kabbalistic and Kabbalistic, to the divine name. See Moshe Idel, "Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names," in R. A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typology* (Peter Lang, New York, 1993) pp. 97-122. See also Rachel Elior, "Between the Mundane Palace and the Celestial Palaces," *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), pp. 363-369 (Hebrew).

136. *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 13a. For more on the Messiah and names see above, n. 25, and *Sha'arei Tzedeq*, p. 16.

137. Abulafia is therefore reducing the function of the high priest to only one of his religious activities, the pronunciation of the divine name, ignoring the sacrificial duties.

138. For another instance of a nexus between the high priest and the Messiah see the seventeenth-century English thinker Anne Conway, who was acquainted with Lurianic Kabbalah: *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Allison P. Coudert and Taylor Corse (Cambridge University Press, Galsgow, 1996), p. 24.

139. See Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 105-108; idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 125-126.

140. See *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 777, fol. 127b. See also *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York, JTS 843, fol. 48a, and in a more detailed manner in app. 1 below.

141. *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Oxford 1582, fol. 13a.

142. See Idel, "Defining Kabbalah," p. 109.

143. See the evidence brought by R. Jacob Sasportas, *Tzitzat Novel Tzevi*, p. 4, Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 247, and idem, *Sabbatai Şevi*, pp. 142-143, where Scholem attempts to weaken the messianic valence of the testimony by claiming that it is "a literary embellishment." Scholem's claim that there was no public messianic aspect of the pronunciation is not corroborated by Sasportas's passage, where he mentions some friends of the young Sabbatai, who encouraged him. See also the salient critique of Tishby on this point, *Paths of Faith and Heresy*, pp. 264-265. On the pronunciation of the divine name in the messianic era according to a late Hasidic author, see Weiss, *Studies*, pp. 241-242.

144. See Even Shmuel, *Midreshei Ge'ullah*, p. 103. Abulafia, who thought of himself as Messiah ben David, refers only rarely to Messiah ben Joseph, whom he identifies as Jesus. In general, his emphasis on *via perfectionis* did not leave room for a pivotal role for a figure that epitomizes *via passionis*. For the importance of this messianic figure in other forms of Kabbalah, see Liebes, "Jonas as Messiah ben Joseph," esp. p. 278.

145. Cf. *Numbers Rabba* 12:12. See Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, pp. 23-25, 45, 132 notes 73-74; Elior, "Between the Mundane Palace and the Celestial Palaces," pp. 349-351. On Metatron as high priest see also the magical text printed by Peter Schaefer und Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1994), 1:164, 173. Although I believe that Himmelfarb and Elior are right in pointing out the similarity between some of the details of the investiture of Enoch when he becomes Metatron and the anointment of the high priest, some of the other details of the description of the elevated Enoch are conspicuously reminiscent of a royal coronation, such as mention of a kingly crown. Thus, in addition to the figure of the high priest, the concept of the king is also essential for the new status of Enoch, who becomes a ruler or angelic governor, *sar*. Thus

again sacral royalty and messianism converge. The persistence of the priestly descriptions related to the ascent theme in the literature analyzed by Himmelfarb and Elior may have something to do with the nexus between the Messiah as a transcendent persona and his priestly extraction in some of the apocryphal writings. See Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 304-309. In *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, which deals with the seventy names of Metatron, the theme of the high priest is frequent. See Odeberg, *Hebrew Enoch*, p. 120.

146. *Yitboded*, a verb that may be translated also as "concentrate mentally": see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 108-111.

147. Ms. Sasoon 56, fol. 34a.

148. On the Holy of the Holiest in Jewish mysticism see Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 379n9; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 20-22. See also *Philo of Alexandria*, translation and introduction by David Winston (Paulist Press, New York, 1981), p. 254; Joshua Finkel, "The Guises and Vicissitudes of a Universal Folk-Belief in Jewish and Greek Tradition," *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, English section (Jerusalem, 1965), 1:236-240, 242-243, where the possible relationship between midrashic material and Philo on the ecstatic experience of the high priest was dealt with; see also Mareen R. Nichoff, "What Is a Name? Philo's Mystical Philosophy of Language," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995), pp. 232-233. Philo is conceived as being of priestly origin: see Daniel P. Schwartz, "Philo's Priestly Descent," F. E. Greenspahn, E. Hilkert, and B. L. Mack, eds., *Nourished with Peace: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism in Memory of Samuel Sandmel* (Scholars Press, Chico, Calif., 1984), pp. 155-171; Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 55-56; M. Idel, "Conceptualizations of Music in Jewish Mysticism," in *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions*, ed. L. E. Sullivan (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1997), pp. 161-169. On the Temple as an allegory for the mystical experience see Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp. 235, 277, 281-282. On the Holy of the Holies as the place of a mystical initiation where also an act of anointment takes place before a mystical communion see the important Gnostic *Gospel of Philip*, whose affinities to Jewish material have been pointed out by several scholars, e.g. Fossum, *Name of God*, p. 307.

149. *Divrei Ymei Yisrael*, 5:185; Shimeon Bernfeld also bases his work on Graetz; cf. his *Da'at Elohim* (Warsaw, 1899), p. 386n1 (Hebrew). See also Israel Friedlander, "Jewish-Arabic Studies," in *JQR*, n.s., 3 (1912-1913), p. 287n428; L. I. Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* (New York, 1925), p. 179; W. J. Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 141. In his *Major Trends*, p. 126, Scholem translates Abulafia's words as follows: "He went to Rome to present himself before the Pope and to confer with him in the name of Jewry," whereas later on, in his Hebrew lectures, printed as *Ha-Kabbalah shel Sefer ha-Temunah ve-shel Avraham Abulafia*, ed. J. ben Shalom (Akadem, Jerusalem, 1969), p. 114, he says: "and to speak with him in the name of Jewry, i.e., to demand from him: 'Let my people go'—this indicates that Abulafia was on a Messianic mission" (Hebrew). Scholem was inclined to marginalize the messianic elements in Abulafia. See e.g. his very concise treatment of this topic in *Major Trends*, p. 128.

150. See Idel, *Chapters in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 67; to the list of scholars mentioned there should be added Greenstone, *Messiah Idea*, p. 170, and Silver, *History of Messianic Speculation*, pp. 88, 146n145.

151. Material that confirms my suggestion to this effect is found in an anonymous treatise that was written, in my opinion, by Abulafia. I have dealt with this new passage in my "Time of the End."

152. See Abulafia's declaration that "despite the fact that I know that there are many Kabbalists who are not perfect, thinking as they are that their perfection consists in not revealing a secret issue, I shall care neither about their thought nor about their blaming me because of the disclosure, since

my view on this is very different from and even opposite to theirs." *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 55a. For another passage from the same book pointing to the same issue see fols. 25b-26a.

153. The poetic epilogue to his book *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, printed by Jellinek as an appendix to Abulafia's *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 87. For the propagandistic activity of Abulafia see also his *Commentary on Sefer ha-Yashar*, Ms. Roma-Angelica 38, fol. 41a. On the linkage between messianism and "missionnisme" see Jankelevitch, "L'espérance et la fin des temps," p. 16, quoting the Russian philosopher Nicolai Losski.

154. See also chap. 3, p. 123. On the connection between the name of God and the Messiah see chap. 6, pp. 199-202.

155. On his activity while a resident of Sicily see M. Idel, "The Ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia in Sicily and Its Transmission during the Renaissance," *Italia Judaica* 5 (1995), pp. 330-340.

156. See Aescoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements*, pp. 231-233.

157. See e.g. *ibid.*, p. 231, where Aescoly speculates that Abulafia's *Sefer ha-'Ot* might have influenced *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, but for the time being I am unable to corroborate this suggestion, though there can be no doubt as to Abulafia's influence on this book.

158. Aescoly's contribution to the modern scholarship of messianism suffered unjustly, both because of the marginalization of the collection of messianic texts and introductions printed only in 1956, years after his death, and the fact that his two other volumes containing collections of messianic texts, which he completed before his death, remained in manuscripts. See e.g. the absence to his views in Scholem's descriptions of messianism as well as the complete absence of his, as well as the marginalization of Klausner's, views in Saperstein's collection *Essential Papers*.

159. I have adduced in this chapter salient material in order to portray the profound messianic character of the ecstatic Kabbalah, but I have not exhausted the pertinent texts. For further discussion, see appendix 1 and Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 45-62.

160. See e.g. Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 39; Werblowsky, "Mysticism and Messianism."

161. *Ibid.* and his "Safed Revival," in Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality*, 2:11. See esp. Dan, "Gershom Scholem and Jewish Messianism," p. 78, who recently decided to exclude Abulafia's name from his own earlier account of thirteenth-century messianism. Compare his "The Emergence of Messianic Mythology," p. 58. This dogmatic approach may be one of the reasons for the absence of new vistas in the field of mysticism and messianism.

Chapter 3: Concepts of Messiah in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Theosophical Forms of Kabbalah

1. On the view that the period of time under consideration is to be seen as part of a Renaissance development see Ben Sasson, *Retzef u-Temurah*, pp. 384-385; Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987), p. 194; Ivan Marcus, "Une communauté pieuse et la doute," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 5 (September-October, 1994), pp. 1046-1047n48; Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," pp. 71-72; *idem*, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 251; Haviva Pedaya, "Figure and Image in the Kabbalistic Interpretation of Nahmanides," *Mahanayim*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 114 (Hebrew); Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Routledge, London, 1995).

2. Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, pp. 38-39; *idem*, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 15. This view has been reiterated oftentimes by Werblowsky; see e.g. his "The Safed Revival," in Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality*, 2:11, where he mentions the alleged "lack of messianic tension in the teachings of the early Kabbalists."

that he refers to both the supernal and the lower Knesset Israel. I suspect, on the basis of a discussion found in this book, p. 139, that there was an affinity between two different words, *mashiyyah* and *meshikhah*, the drawing down, which was due to their similar pronunciation.

93. *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, p. 103.

94. See above, chap. 5, n. 87.

95. See e.g. the view of R. Moses Cordovero, who claims that because of the *tiqqun* that is accomplished during the Sabbath, which affects the sefirot of Tiferet and Malkhut, redemption occurs, and there is no more galut. Cf. his *Tefillah le-Moshe*, fol. 217b. This Kabbalist also uses the term *tiqqun ha-shekhinah* in similar contexts; cf. *ibid.*, fol. 241a. Sabbath as an anticipation of the next world is a commonplace in rabbinic Judaism.

96. See also above, the formulations I adduced from Levenson and Neher in chap. 1, n. 27.

97. See, more recently, the collection of articles entitled *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1992).

98. See, in another context, Robert Alter, "The Apocalyptic Temper," *Commentary* 41 (June, 1966), pp. 62-63.

99. On the idea of plenitude see also the interesting observations of Durand, *Figures mythiques*, pp. 78, 337.

100. See Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 35.

101. See above, chap. 5, n. 33.

Appendix 1: Ego, Ergo Sum Messiah: On Abraham Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Yashar*

1. See *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. München 285, fol. 36ab.

2. The biblical phrase "angel of 'Elohim" occurs several times in Abulafia's discussion of messianism. On its significance as pointing to both a prophet and an angelic messenger see William M. Schniedewind, *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple* (Sheffield Academic Press, JSOT, 1995), pp. 82-84.

3. This view is also expressed in the commentary on *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. München 285, fol. 36a.

4. Compare the formula used by Nathan of Gaza when he introduced his most important vision: "Thus speaks the Lord." Cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 204-205; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 81-82.

5. Ms. München 285, fol. 24a.

6. Cf. Ezekiel, 39:20, 29. On this formula see Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, p. 117.

7. See Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 680, fol. 298a. These two names are referred to in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah as representative of the male and female divine potencies, 'Adonay standing for the Malkhut and YHWH for Tiferet, and they are conjoined in order to induce and symbolize a state of union between these potencies. See Mark Vernon, *The History and Variety of Jewish Meditation* (Jason Aronson, Northvale, N.J., 1996), pp. 191-210, esp. 199, and Abulafia, *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 69.

8. *Ibid.*, fol. 297b.

9. On this divine name see Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 18, 22, 31; Wolfson, "Doctrine of Sefirot," pp. 353-354n54.

10. See also the eighth-century Muslim author who claimed prophethood and the revelation of the divine name mentioned in Widengren, *Muhammad*, p. 30. See also *ibid.*, pp. 141-142, where Enoch is described, in a rather ancient text, the *Book of John the Evangelist*, as both a teacher and a

revealer of the divine name. On prophecy and the divine name in early-thirteenth-century sources see also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, pp. 181-187.

11. For more on this issue see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 47. For an interesting parallel in Islamic mysticism, see Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, p. 256.

12. See Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, p. 98. See also below, my discussion of the Messiah as high priest.

13. See De Fraine, *L'aspect religieux*, pp. 207-208, 223-230; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 224-226.

14. Cf. *Commentary to Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. München 285, fol. 36a.

15. *Yitpa'er*. This verb is used by Abulafia in the context of his own claim to have received a revelation of the date of the end. See the passage from his epistle *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, p. 18.

16. See his *Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York JTS 843, fol. 45b.

17. See the passage from commentary on *Sefer ha-Hayyim*, translated above, chap. 2, pp. 73-74. The number seven may point to a vision of sealing a cycle or sealing the whole series of prophets. The concept of sealing is implied in the very title of the last of the first series of Abulafia's prophetic writings, *Sefer Hotam ha-Haftarah*. On sealing of prophecy see Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, "Seal of Prophets": The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986), pp. 61-74; Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 49-82. On seven figures who were apparently also seen as prophets who precede the Messiah, already in the Judeo-Christian tradition preserved in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, 17:4, see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in Early Church*, trans. D. R. A. Hare, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 70-73. On the relation between the seventh benediction and redemption see Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 654-655, 676-677.

18. See above, chap. 5, p. 161.

19. Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 164b, printed in Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrasch*, 3:xli.

20. This is a play on the Hebrew consonants of Messina.

21. *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 165b, printed in Jellinek, *Beit ha-Midrasch*.

22. Ms. München 285, fol. 24a.

23. It is ironic that the last letters constitute the noun *tehilat*, which means "beginning."

24. Ms. München 285, fol. 25a. The four words are therefore not the title of a book, as Scholem suggested, *Major Trends*, p. 382.

25. See Idel, *Mystical Experience*, p. 89. The double gematria, 'Ediy = Hanokh = 84 and Sahadiy = Metatron = 314 is already found among Hasidei Ashkenaz. See e.g. Rokeach [R. Eleazar of Worms], *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Chaim Konyevsky (Benei Beraq, 1986), 1:95.

26. See e.g. Idel, *Mystical Experience*, p. 102; *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, p. 21.

27. The Hebrew form is *keli qarav la-nev'ah*. Compare the similar formulation found in *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 149b: *derekh . . . gerovah*.

28. This view of knowledge is closer to the Aristotelian or Platonic view, while Abulafia is concerned more with the higher experience of knowledge as a sudden revelation. For the two types of knowledge see Neher, *Prophetic Experience*, pp. 103-104.

29. The Hebrew formulations are unclear here.

30. *BT, Sanhedrin*, fol. 38a. See also above, chap. 2, n. 32, where the same formula serves for conveying the sense of a mystical union between the human intellect and the Agent Intellect. Apparently the term *rav* pointing to God in the talmudic literature, with which the angelic Metatron was related by having the same name, has been transposed onto Metatron itself, and the mystic is described as sharing with it the same name, in our case *moreh*. See also *Major Trends*.

p. 140, where Scholem compares this term with the Indian *guru*. In some texts found in Ashkenazi Hasidism, Metatron is described as a teacher of infants who died before studying the Torah. See e.g. the text inserted in a manuscript of Heikhalot literature printed in A. M. Haberman, *Hadashim Gam Yeshanim* (Mass Printing House, Jerusalem, 1972), p. 99 (Hebrew).

31. Here the term *devequt* is used.

32. Ms. Rome—Angelica 38, fols. 31b–32a; Ms. München 285, fol. 26b, printed in Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 140–141, 382. See also Schultz, *Judaism and the Gentile Faiths*, p. 325n5, who suggests, on the basis of the quotation adduced by Scholem, that Abulafia's view of *hokhmah*, *binah* and *da'at* had perhaps influenced Lubavitch Hasidism, which highlighted these terms.

33. This criterion is mentioned also in the ecstatic *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 22–24.

34. Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 680, fol. 297b.

35. See above, chap. 2, pp. 90–90, in the quotation from *Sefer Mafteah ha-Tokhehot*.

36. On the Agent Intellect as Metatron and Messiah see above, chap. 2, esp. n. 30.

37. If the two titles describe different spiritual moments, they should be compared to the double Messiah in some Qumranic texts, while in others they are paralleled by a Messiah and Doresh ha-Torah. See 4Q Florilegium, discussed by Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumranic Scrolls," in Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah*, p. 125.

38. See Wieder, *Judean Scrolls*, pp. 86–87 and the bibliography mentioned there, as well as the more recent discussions of M. A. Knibb, "The Teacher of Righteousness—A Messianic Title?" in P. R. Davies and R. T. White, ed., *A Tribute to Geza Vermes* (Sheffield, 1990), pp. 51–66, and Collins, "A Throne in the Heavens," pp. 54–55. Collins proposed to interpret a description of enthronement found in the Qumran literature as reminiscent of Moses and the teacher of righteousness, though not of the Messiah, and thus distinguishes between a somewhat eschatological figure and the Messiah. His only piece of evidence for a parallel to the Qumran text is Moses' enthronement, as found in Ezekiel's *Exagogue*; see *ibid.*, p. 51. What seems to be interesting is that a view similar to the ancient description of Moses as seeing the past, present, and future is found in ecstatic Kabbalah. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 74, 84n7. For more on the Messiah as an educator see Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, p. 324, referring to the Psalms of Solomon. For a contemporary of Abulafia, R. Moshe of Burgos, who mentions the excellence of the esoteric studies of the Messiah, and the book of the *Zohar* itself, see Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 18.

39. See Even Shmuel, *Midreshet Ge'ullah*, p. 74, translated in Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, p. 125. See also the parallel text translated by Patai, *ibid.*, pp. 26–27. See also above, chap. 6, n. 73, for the use of this talmudic formula in the context of Sabbathai Tzevi.

40. See *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 129b. He refers to Capua in his commentary to *Sefer ha-Yashar* several times, implying that this book was already in existence and had been criticized before he left the place. See Ms. München 285, fol. 24b.

41. See Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 774, fol. 119a.

42. In *Sefer ha-'Edut*, quoted in chapter 2.

43. See the passage from *Sefer Mafteah ha-Tokhehot*, quoted in chapter 2.

44. The history of the term "soteriology" is not clear, and on its availability depends the possibility of an influence on Abulafia's phrases.

45. On this Kabbalist see the discussions of Gottlieb, *Studies*, pp. 231–247.

46. In R. Yitzhaq of Acre's writings, this is an common acronym for Metatron, *Sar Ha-panim*.

47. There is no verse to this effect; R. Yitzhaq created a dichotomy between a wheel on earth, mentioned in continuation, and one on high.

48. In many sources from ecstatic Kabbalah, this angel is related to the lower elements in creation and in man.

49. The gematria of the consonants is 280, like the five final characters. Compare also to a similar discussion found in another collection of fragments from *'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Oxford 1911, fols. 158b-159a.

50. *Ya'ar* means "wood," and its gematria is again 280. Since in other cases Sandalfon is identified with matter, I wonder whether the term *hyle* does not underlie the resort to the term "wood." See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p. 77. The connection between *hyle* and Sandalfon is evident also in R. Shmuel ibn Motot, *Sefer Tehillot ha-Shem*, Ms. Vatican 225, fol. 54a.

51. *Ruhaniyyut*. This term has several meanings in Hebrew. See Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, index, sub voce *ruhaniyyut*.

52. Namely the voice of God, the master of Metatron.

53. See *BT, Sanhedrin*, fol. 38b.

54. A reformulation of Isaiah 63:9.

55. This verse is also quoted below, in another passage from the same book and an anonymous discussion dealing with a variety of forms of Metatron. The book was written, in my opinion, by R. Yitzhaq of Acre; it has been preserved solely in R. Moses of Kiev's *Sefer Shoshan Sodot* (Koretz, 1784), fols. 71a-72a. There he mentions the "emanated Metatron," the "created Metatron," the "sensible Metatron," and even a "compounded Metatron." Another unknown passage by R. Yitzhaq has been identified by scholars some lines before the passage on Metatron, *ibid.*, fol. 69b. See Gottlieb, *Studies*, p. 247. I suspect that another short discussion concerning the two angels, which includes a view of Metatron as participating in the grief of Israel, is preserved in *Sefer ha-Peliyah*, vol. 1, fol. 23d. Metatron could even be part of the human soul, in which case it may be possible to have the Messiah within one's soul. See *'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Sassoon 919, p. 32, where Metatron and Sandalfon stand, respectively, for the divine and the acquired intellects dwelling in the rational soul. This view is well represented both in ecstatic Kabbalah and in some late-thirteenth-century philosophers. The assumption that the perfect inner spiritual experience may have a messianic overtone may be corroborated by a detailed analysis of the context of the important passage of R. Yitzhaq of Acre discussed above, in chapter 3.

56. *Sefer 'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Guensburg 775, fol. 93ab.

57. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 76-79. Sometimes Sandalfon even is identified with Sammael. See Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Melammed*, Ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale 680, fol. 307a.

58. Cf. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 78, 86n28. See also *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq*, written by a student of Abulafia, pp. 17-18. I would like, however, to draw attention to an interesting passage that deals with the hastening of the coming of the Messiah by means of a corporeal device. In a collection of passages from *'Otzar Hayyim*, found in Ms. Oxford 1911, fol. 158b, the Kabbalist describes positively the seclusion of someone for the sake of mystical life after fulfilling the commandment to procreate. But despite his approval of this behavior, he mentions another alternative: to continue to procreate in order to augment the supernal image by dint of the dictum in *BT, Yevamot*, fol. 62a, which deals with the advent of Ben David, namely the Messiah, when all the souls will be exhausted from the apparently supernal body. Intensive procreation is described as "hastening the time of the coming of our Messiah." I assume that as intense spiritual life ensures a messianic experience by the encounter with the spiritual Metatron qua transcendent Messiah, intense procreation brings about the descent of the Messiah in the more public arena, probably in a manner more consonant with the apocalyptic traditions.

59. See *Sefer 'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Guensburg 775, fol. 94a. The relation between sheep and the Messiah is also found elsewhere in Abulafia's circle. In the anonymous *Sefer Ner Elohim*, Ms. München 11, fol. 148b: "Kavshi'el is *ha-mashiyah, kovesh be-koah*." All these words in gematria amount to 363. Two different interpretations of the consonantal roots KBS and KBSh

display two different understandings of the messiah. The former root, related to sheep, implies suffering, while the latter implies the conquest of the Messiah, namely the idea of power.

60. Cf. e.g. John 1:29. See Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 230-236; Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993), pp. 200-219.

61. See Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 112-119.

62. M. Idel, "Prometheus in a Hebrew Garb," *Eshkolot*, n.s., 5-6 (1980-1981), pp. 119-120 (Hebrew). Meanwhile I have identified a new manuscript, Ms. Budapest A 240, p. 215.

63. *Ha-derekh ha-nistar*. This is the lowest of the four ways of Kabbalistic interpretations in this Kabbalist's hermeneutics.

64. When I first published the Hebrew original of this text in *Eshkolot*, I decoded these consonants as MoSheH, namely Moses. But as Dr. Boaz Huss, in an unpublished article entitled "NiSaN, The Wife of the Infinite: The Mystical Hermeneutics of Rabbi Isaac of Acre," has correctly proposed, it is much more plausible to decode the same consonants as an acronym of Metatron, *Sar Ha-panim*.

65. *Derekh ha-'emmet* is one of the lower symbolic ways of interpretation in R. Yitzhaq's hermeneutics.

66. This is the sixth sefirah, which is the center of the last seven divine powers and is situated on the median line of the entire sefirotic realm. On the median line in early Kabbalah see Alexander Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 27-29; Idel, "Types of Redemptive Activities," pp. 259, 265.

67. This is an appellation for the last sefirah, Malkhut, which is also situated on the median line.

68. In many cases this term stands not for Spain in general but for Castile. See Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," p. 72.

69. Compare the view of R. Yitzhaq of Ya'aqov ha-Kohen, a Castilian Kabbalist who describes the disappearance of evil using the very same words. See his "Ma'amar ha-'Atzilut ha-Semalit," printed by Gershom Scholem, *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1927), p. 250: *me-'eyin 'atzilutam haytah 'afisatam*.

70. *Sefer 'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Guensburg 775, fol. 85b.

71. See *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, Ms. New York, JTS 1801, fol. 17a. Compare also Abulafia's *Sefer 'Or ha-Sekhel*, Ms. Vatican 233, fols. 117b-118a.

72. Josh. 10:12; 2 Sam. 1:17-19.

73. See *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 5:2; translated in Patai, *Messiah Texts*, pp. 136-137.

74. Cf. Idel, *Mystical Experience*, p. 140.

75. *Ibid.*; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 50-51.

76. See *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. München 285, fols. 37b, 40b. See also the text adduced in Idel, *Mystical Experience*, pp. 140-141. Abulafia was apparently well aware of the messianic significance of such a phrase, for he describes Jesus as someone who founded "a new religion" and assumed the title of the Anointed One. See his *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. München, 341, fol. 160b. See also Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 53-54.

77. Ms. Roma-Angelica 38, fol. 37a.

78. *Commentary on Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. München 285, fol. 37b.

79. See *Commentary on Sefer ha-Yashar*, Ms. Roma-Angelica 38, fol. 41a.

80. *Sefer Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York, JTS 843, fol. 68b. For a possible source of this view see R. Abraham bar Hiyya's *Sefer Megillat ha-Megalleh* (Berlin, 1924), p. 43: "and the supreme

order of them all [of all the types of prophecy] is that He will tell him the meaning of the name, as He told it to Moses."

81. See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, *passim*.

82. See also Moshe Idel, "Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names," in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typology*, ed. R. A. Herrera (Peter Lang, New York, 1993), pp. 97-122.

Appendix 2: *Tiqqun Hatzot*: A Ritual between Myth, Messianism, and Mysticism

1. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 146; see also *ibid.*, p. 152.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

4. In the German original the word is *merkwürdig*; cf. *Zur Kabbala und Ihrer Symbolik* (Rhein-Verlag, Zurich, 1960), p. 196. In the Hebrew version of the article, the translator has chosen a more dramatic rendering, *mufla'*, "wonderful."

5. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 149.

6. *Ibid.*

7. See Gries, *Conduct Literature*.

8. In fact, Kabbalists, mostly Lurianic ones such as R. Moses Alsheikh, R. Hayyim ha-Kohen in Aleppo, and R. Ya'akov Hayyim Tzemah in Jerusalem, had composed poems connected to the ritual, and some of them have become an integral part of it. In this context it is important to mention the occurrence of an anonymous poem described as having been brought from Jerusalem; cf. *Siddur ha-'Ari*, fol. 37a.

9. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 146-148. In fact, Scholem contradicts himself, since on the same page (146) he claims that from the experience of the exile of the nation "there sprang a great wealth of rites." See also *ibid.*, p. 149.

10. Peter Kuhn, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der Rabbinischen Überlieferung (Talmud und Midrasch)* (Brill, Leiden, 1978), pp. 426-427; Israel Ta-Shma, "Halakhic Allusions in ibn Zabara's *Sefer ha-Sha'ashu'im*," *Sinai* 67 (1970), p. 282 (Hebrew); Moshe Hallamish, in an appendix to Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Israel* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1994), 2:219-220 (Hebrew); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*, p. 196n19; *Toledoth Ha-Ari*, ed. Benayahu, pp. 227-228.

11. Magid, "Conjugal Union."

12. See especially Magid, "Conjugal Union," pp. xix-xxv. More material that predates the sixteenth-century vigils is extant, but I would like not to enter the historical question in this context. See, for non-Kabbalistic sources, Moshe Zucker, "Reactions to the Movement of 'Avelei Tzion in the Rabbinic Literature," in *Jubilee Volume for Prof. Hanoch Albeck* (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. 378-401 (Hebrew); Bernard Bamberger, "A Messianic Document of the Seventh Century," *HUCA* 15 (1940), pp. 425-431. The religious importance of this group for a Safedian Kabbalist is quite evident in a text by Cordovero: see Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 232, who follows the lead of the *Zohar*.

13. See *'Orah Hayyim*, 1:2. Compare, however, Maggid, "Conjugal Union," p. xix, n. 7, who considers Karo's statement to have been written under the impact of the Lurianic ritual. If Karo's statement preceded Luria, which seems likely since his book was already in print (Venice, 1565) for four or five years before Luria arrived in Safed. Maggid's claim that "it is only with Luria that this nocturnal ritual become a formalized prayer service" (*ibid.*, pp. xix, xxiv) is called into question.

14. See Ira Robinson, "Messianic Prayer Vigils in Jerusalem in the Early Sixteenth Century," *JQR* 52 (1981), pp. 38-42; Idel, "On Mishmarot and Messianism." As I have argued, I prefer not to deduce the mourning customs in Safed from their Jerusalemitic antecedents. On the other side,